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**TRIUMPH OF MORAL GOOD  
OVER EVIL.**





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**TRIUMPH OF MORAL GOOD  
OVER EVIL.**

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**COMplete TRIUMPH**  
**OF**  
**MORAL GOOD OVER EVIL.**

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# COMPLETE TRIUMPH OF MORAL GOOD OVER EVIL

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## CHAPTER I.

I HAVE a strong conviction that the representations of theologians concerning the purposes of the Creator towards His intelligent creatures differ greatly from the statements in the Sacred Volume. It appears to me that the systems of doctrine put forth by the different branches of the Christian Church misconceive, in a serious and important degree, the nature of the Gospel plan of salvation, the mode of its operation, and the vast and beneficent objects contemplated. I believe the Christian Church has hitherto interpreted the declarations respecting the great scheme of redemption in a narrow and distorted manner, somewhat resembling the confused notions of the Jewish people in regard to the prophecies concerning the Messiah. The evil consequences which have followed have been of a similar



nature, both in respect to themselves and their capacity of usefulness to the world.

It is self-evident, I think, that the conceptions which Christians have of the character of God must necessarily be affected by their opinions respecting His designs in regard to His creatures. They cannot have right conceptions of His character if the purposes they ascribe to Him appear inconsistent with wisdom, justice, and goodness. If Christians do not understand and perceive the real objects of the great plan of mercy, for the accomplishment of which the Saviour came into the world, they cannot enter with heart and soul into the spirit of the Gospel, nor labour earnestly to extend its influence throughout the earth. If they have narrow-minded and perverted ideas of that which is emphatically and pre-eminently called 'good tidings of great joy,' their feelings must be chilled, and their faith rendered lukewarm; or they may become animated by a fanatical and ferocious spirit, blended with presumptuous confidence and self-conceit. The existence of serious errors on points so important, among the exponents of Christianity, must have a paralysing effect upon their efforts for its diffusion. If they misinterpret and pervert the Gospel message to the world, they produce a false impression, in regard to the character of God, upon those whom they wish to instruct, and intensify the natural alienation of the human heart from the Creator, impeding rather than promoting the welfare of mankind.

Are there not symptoms of paralysis strongly manifested? Is there not reason to suppose, that the representations of the Christian Church respecting the character and purposes of God must be wrong—or, in other words, that the Gospel is not proclaimed in its clear, full tenor—when we contemplate the aspect of the world in the nineteenth century of the Christian era? When we consider the state of Heathen and Mohammedan lands, which constitute by far the greater portion of the earth, the sight they present is most disheartening and appalling, particularly if we call to mind that, since the early ages of Christianity, the sway and even the knowledge of its hallowed principles and precepts have scarcely had any extension. But, even if we confine our attention to the countries which profess Christianity, and are foremost in advancing the march of civilisation and intelligence, very grave and painful reflections are suggested. It can hardly be said that the elementary principles of what is called natural theology are firmly established among the most educated men. There is a steady progress of knowledge in many branches of physical science, and the great forces and energies of Nature are made subservient to man's wants and comforts, even to the gratification of his passing caprices and fancies. There have also been witnessed, during the present century, many salutary modifications in the general views concerning the relations of man to man. But can any progress be observed, in enlightened, well-defined ideas, as to

#### 4            *Triumph of Moral Good over Evil.*

the relations of God to man? Has the Christian Church even succeeded, with all its arguments and teachings, in establishing clearly and unanswerably, in the convictions of civilised men, the great fundamental doctrine, that there is a God?

We find that men of high intelligence and, apparently, of sincere and earnest minds, although living in Christian communities, are unable to discern that great truth which the Apostle declares to be clearly and forcibly manifested, by the wondrous structure of the earth and heavens, even without an inspired revelation. They seem to be quite incapable of perceiving, that the material universe affords unmistakable testimony to the 'eternal power and godhead' of the Creator, as a Being really existing, and possessing not only power, but volition, wisdom, exquisite skill, adaptation, and great benevolence. Some express themselves as if they believed that matter alone exists, and has always existed, without a beginning, and without an intelligent First Cause. They themselves, and all their fellow-men, are composed of atoms, and destitute of any spiritual essence. The atoms which constitute animate and inanimate nature are indestructible, but constantly subject to endless varieties of combinations and transformations, some of which produce physical, and others mental, phenomena; although never, in any case, are they originated or guided by an intelligent Superintendence. All things and all animals, whether rational or irrational, are

coerced and impelled by a blind mechanical force not issuing from a defined motive power. The nature of this blind, unintelligent force is left unexplained, and a man of plain understanding must find it extremely difficult to conceive from whence it emanates, how its existence was discovered, and how it can possibly operate to the extent of conferring the slightest movement upon a single atom. Other men, also enjoying the reputation of eminent ability, seem to deny the existence of matter altogether, and even to disclaim their own personal identity, or the separate and distinct existence of any human being. They recognise only one vast spiritual Being or Substance, in whom is contained all that appears to be Matter and all that appears to be Mind. That Being—if Being it can be called—has no volition, and exercises no intelligent action. Yet, by an inexplicable necessity in the nature of that Being, it constantly puts forth and develops portions of itself, in various forms and aspects, with illimitable profusion and irresistible force, although without will or intelligence, without aim or object. That Being has no self-consciousness, although it alone exists, has always existed, and will always exist. The animal and spiritual natures which emanate from it, although they have a delusive self-consciousness, are in reality portions of that one universally-pervading, solely-existing, though unconscious, Being or Substance.

In the foregoing passages I have endeavoured to make a brief statement of the impressions I

have derived, respecting the views held by Materialists and Pantheists,\* of whom there appear to be thousands, and perhaps millions, in countries professing Christianity. I can discover no foundation in such doctrines for religious belief and emotion, as there is no recognition of an intelligent First Cause, a God who can inspire veneration and love. These two systems are perhaps, as a French writer states, rigorously and essentially the same, although differing in form. Practically, in so far as I can understand them, they both deny the existence of an intelligent Creator and Upholder of the universe. Yet, among the teachers of the two systems, have been and still are found men of high intelligence, who are apparently prompted by sincere convictions and earnest feelings.

Some of the modern Pantheists, whose theories, put forth in lengthy disquisitions, are perplexing and yet fascinating the minds of men, profess to believe in a sort of universally pervading abstraction, which they denominate 'Idea,' 'Absolute Identity,' 'Absolute Eternal Substance,' supposed to contain and comprise the human mind, and all the objects that seem to be apart or distinct from that mind,—the 'ego' and 'non ego.' These theories, which are very difficult to lay hold of, appear substantially the same as that of which I have just endeavoured to give a sketch. Although some of these so-called philosophers manifest a wish to reconcile their systems with Christianity,

\* Neander considers Pantheism to be suited to the tendencies of modern thought, and to be acquiring great power.

they do not, as far as I am able to perceive, recognise the God of the Bible. I will quote two passages from the sacred text, in order to show how impossible it would be to apply them to their cold, vague, unimpressive, shadowy, intangible abstractions. 'Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy; I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.'\* 'God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.'†

I may also notice the system called Positivism—an ambitious title, which seems to claim the merit of being pre-eminently the guide to the attainment of realities. Its founder may fairly be considered to have rendered much service, by directing attention to the great importance of studying the physical sciences in their relation to the welfare of mankind, individually and collectively; and particularly by his lucid exposition of the inductive method of conducting scientific investigations. The human race have suffered greatly, in all ages and countries, and still continue to suffer much injury (even where knowledge most prevails), in health, comfort, and duration of life, from ignorance and error on points which have the most obvious connection with human welfare. I presume the singular

\* Isaiah lvii. 15.

† 1 John iv. 16.

assertion he put forth, that it would be a proof of superior intelligence in man to confine his thoughts exclusively to the affairs of this life, can have very little intellectual influence upon serious minds. It is indeed too true that multitudes act as if they believed such a theory. But, probably, few can succeed in extinguishing all reflections concerning the possibilities of a future state of existence, and the relations of mankind to God. I have no doubt that Comte was sincerely desirous of establishing a system calculated to secure peace, justice, and mutual kindness among men. He seemed to think, that if he could convince men, from the records of history, and by illustrations drawn from political, social, and domestic relations, that the general and individual welfare would be attained by the right conduct of each and all, a sort of 'positive' millennium might gradually be introduced and firmly established. His system not only fails to provide any effective moral force to counteract human selfishness, and to restrain and regulate the vehemence of human passions, but furnishes no consolation for the sorrows of the heart. This he himself discovered, in the bitter hour of grief, and endeavoured to rectify the terrible deficiency by an extraordinary invention, which is so fantastical, and so inoperative for the objects in view, as almost to justify the supposition that he had not been completely freed from the mental infirmities which afflicted him in early life. His system rejects, as absolutely absurd, any belief in a Supreme Being,

and, in so doing, assumes an air of superior wisdom on that very account.

Rationalism also appears to me to reject the God of the Bible; and, if I mistake not, multitudes of intelligent, educated Englishmen are found among its votaries. It seems to me that its advocates are rendering great services to humanity, and at the same time are producing evils against which they furnish no antidotes nor counteractive influences. They have assumed the mission of overthrowing and pulling down, and, like Socrates, do not profess to reconstruct. I propose, in a subsequent part of this chapter, to make some more particular observations on their pretensions as leaders of human thought.

It is difficult to conceive that any man of intelligence can look upon the earth and heavens without being impressed by the proofs afforded of a God of wisdom, power, and benevolence. Bacon said, 'I had rather believe all the fables of the Legend, the Talmud, and the Alcoran, than that this universal frame is without a mind.' Locke declared, 'I judge it as certain and clear a truth as can anywhere be delivered, that the invisible things of God are clearly seen from the creation of the world, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.' I can hardly suppose that Materialists and Pantheists overlook the force of such evidences. But\*

\* Hume said, 'The whole frame of Nature bespeaks an intelligent author.' But he did not believe that the Deity possessed infinite power and goodness, as he considered those attributes inconsistent



I can imagine that, when they reflect on the disorder and confusion which the past history and present situation of man exhibit, they are unable to comprehend how or why such a state of things should exist, under the superintendence of a supreme, all-directing, all-controlling Mind. To them the beauty and order in the physical department, although indicating the most exquisite design and adaptation, may seem to be so much counterbalanced by the dark and gloomy aspect of the more important department of intellectual and moral life, as to destroy the evidences for the existence of a supreme, wisely directing Intelligence, or at any rate greatly to weaken their force. Some men have humble, submissive, trusting spirits, and others have not. Some of the former, even among heathen philosophers, perceived God in His works, and hoped that light and order would hereafter be shed over the moral, as well as the physical, universe. But there are minds so strangely constituted that they can attribute the wonders of the material universe to that which they call 'blind force,' 'mechanical

with the disorder and misery on the earth. Mr. Lewes, a philosopher of our own day, has a different mode of viewing the subject. Instead of being impressed by the grandeur, magnificence, exquisite taste, admirable adaptation, minute, elaborate contrivance displayed in every department of the physical universe, his eyes persistently gaze on supposed blemishes, irregularities, and anomalies, and he seems to think that they completely overbalance the unnumbered evidences of wisdom. What would have been the conclusions and assertions of such a mind if in existence when Chaos was brooding over a weary succession of ages!

necessity,' although they do not define the meaning of such terms, and, so far as I am aware, have made no effort to show that a blind force, originating, but not originated, could possibly exist. I quote the terms 'blind force' and 'mechanical necessity' from Sir W. Hamilton's Lectures on Metaphysics, and I observe that Mr. J. S. Mill, in his 'Examination of Hamilton's Philosophy,' represents him as stating that 'fate or necessity, without a God, might account for the phenomena of matter.' I am not much surprised that men who reject revelation also reject the belief in spiritual natures, and regard matter as alone existing. Our ideas of the essential distinction between spirit and matter are vague and confused; and we are unable to form any clear notion concerning our own spirits. The phenomena of instinct in the lower animals, and the manifestation by some of a degree of intelligence and affection closely resembling such qualities in human beings, tend to perplex the subject still more, as most people seem to believe, that all those phenomena in the lower animals result entirely from a material organisation.

It must appear strange to thoughtful and serious minds, impressed by religious convictions, that Pantheism and Materialism have not been as completely banished by the light of Christianity as the old astronomical theories were dissipated by the demonstrations of science. The revival of the latter has become absolutely impossible, while the former are manifesting a singular amount of

self-assertion, in the midst of intelligent communities. Their forms are somewhat modified; but they reject or ignore the God of the Bible with an air as decided as if no such book existed. I have no doubt that those ancient errors would not have ventured to exhibit their incoherent fantasies in Christian lands, either in their primitive or in a modernised garb; that Positivism could not have presented any claims to intellectual attention in its anti-religious features; and that Rationalism would have withheld its sneers and covert insinuations, if the great truths of the Bible had been clearly understood and interpreted. If the character and purposes of the Creator were luminously and impressively set forth, it would be impossible for intelligent and earnest-minded men to deny His existence, and His efficient, wise, and beneficent control over the affairs of the universe. I feel convinced that the declarations of the Saviour and His Apostles afford sufficient light to mitigate the gloom which oppresses humanity, and to indicate a glorious solution of the dark problems which have bewildered eminent minds in all ages, and have driven many into practical Atheism. But the teachers of Christianity actually intensify the fearful darkness that broods over the immeasurable vista of futurity, by persistently maintaining traditional notions which have descended from cruel and ferocious epochs. They convert the glorious disclosures of a vast plan of correction and recovery, emanating from Divine love and wisdom, into an inexorable exhibition of a chequered scene of

never-ending misery and confusion, blended with partial order, light, and happiness. They substitute for the dreary uncertainty in which mankind were groping a positive announcement of unmitigated horror and despair; and thereby evoke a growing disposition to question the authority of the volume from which they profess to derive their stern denunciations of hopeless ruin and anguish.

I believe, however, that the busy and stirring movements of intellect in our day, even those which have an anti-religious aspect, are in a great degree originated and stimulated by the light shed on the community from the perusal of the Scriptures. I shall endeavour to show that, by the action of this enlightening influence, errors on points of great, though not of the highest, importance have been partially corrected; and that the more accurate views now generally held, in regard to the relations between man and man, are exercising a moral and intellectual pressure which must, before long, compel a revision of long cherished misconceptions in regard to the relations of God to man. The free circulation of the Sacred Volume gradually illuminates different strata of the intellectual atmosphere, and, by producing increased clearness of apprehension in one department, renders it more difficult than before to maintain erroneous views in a higher department. There must be a congruity in errors to sustain each other. Every fresh acquisition of an important fact or principle furnishes new weapons and appliances, to gain victories over prejudices and errors,

and to penetrate farther into the vast domains of truth. We are intellectually better qualified than our forefathers to understand the Gospel plan of mercy to man ; and I trust and believe that future generations will rise to far more comprehensive and enlightened views than we may be able to attain.

There is probably a greater disposition in our day than ever there was before to question and investigate every species of opinion and every statement of alleged facts. In a Charge delivered by the Bishop of Oxford, in December, 1866, this tendency was noticed in the following words, which I quote from the 'Times': 'The rising temper of the day was marked by an impatience of authority human and Divine, which was running rapidly into utter lawlessness. Every opinion, every institution, almost every fact in politics, in history, in morals, and in religion was assailed.' A similar statement was made, though in a different tone, in an article on the Church of England, which appeared at the same time in a periodical, and bears the name of a young nobleman, wherein it is said: 'Religion is learning to appeal less to authority, and more to reason. . . . The sole case in which the principle of authority still remains in considerable force is that of Scripture, and even here it is manifestly declining.' One of the writers of the 'Times' expressed the same idea in a leading article, at about the same period; and I will quote the following strong sentences: 'It is impossible to be acquainted with what is passing in

the world of letters and in civilised society, both in Europe and America, without coming to the conclusion that great changes are likely to be effected in the thoughts of Christendom within the present century. Whether for good or evil, a revolution is at hand.' Another journalist of reputation ('Pall Mall Gazette') informs his readers that the basis of religion is attacked 'on grounds which require consideration,' and that 'the questions are broadly and fairly asked: Do you believe in a God? Do you believe in a future life? . . . . Do you know the objections to your views, and how do you deal with them?' M. Guizot, in his recent work on the actual state of Christianity, notices, in a very serious and earnest manner, the attacks to which it is subjected. He says: 'Let us not delude ourselves as to the character, the force, or the danger of this anti-Christian movement. It is not merely a feverish excitability in men's minds, a simple revolutionary crisis in the religious order. No; we have here earnest convictions at work, and the prospect of a long war. Impatience of an ancient yoke, a spirit of reaction, a love of innovation, frivolous instincts not a few, as well as evil impulses, may claim a share—and a large share—in the attacks of which Christianity is, in these days, the object; but what gives to these attacks their most formidable character is a sentiment far more serious, one that has made heroes and martyrs—the love of truth at all risk, and in despite of consequences, for the sake of truth, and for its sake alone. . . . The

most eminent among the actual adversaries of Christianity believe themselves the interpreters and defenders of truth; some of philosophical truth, others of historical truth, others again of the facts and laws of the physical world.'

M. Guizot justly remarks: 'To maintain the combat worthily and efficaciously, we should at the onset accord to our adversaries the whole amount of their merits as well as of their strength.' The habit of imputing bad motives to opponents, which many defenders of Christianity adopt, is alike deficient in courtesy, justice, and good sense; and, I think, often springs from a consciousness of weakness, either in the line of argument employed, or in the personal capacity of the defender to sustain it. The conduct of St. Paul was very different. He said, in reference to those who opposed Christianity with the greatest virulence: 'I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.'\* He remembered that he himself had been animated by sincere, though misguided zeal, when he persecuted the Christians, even unto death. So, also, he bore this testimony in regard to Gentiles and Jews: 'We speak the wisdom of God . . . which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.'† In another place he says: 'We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.'‡ He

\* Rom. x. 2.

† 1 Cor. ii. 7, 8.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 23.

evidently means, that both the parties referred to regarded the doctrine of a crucified Saviour as absurd, and sincerely believed it to be such, as it was completely at variance with the ideas and principles which they considered undoubted. The advocates of Christianity ought to act in the same way, and to recognise in many of their opponents a sincere desire to believe that which appears to them true and right. If they cannot do so, they ought to leave the question of motives untouched. It is the more incumbent in them to act thus, as I firmly believe that they themselves are in a great degree accountable for the disorganised condition of public opinion. They not only fail as a body (in which there are brilliant and admirable exceptions) to meet the objections urged against Christianity with intelligence and candour; but present such a want of agreement and so much bitterness of feeling among themselves, that their efforts, however well meant, rather prejudice than serve the cause which they seek to uphold. Besides, I believe that the main provocative of intellectual opposition to Christianity is to be found in the distorted exhibition given of it by those who profess to be its exponents.

There is one consideration which deserves some notice. During the last quarter of a century the ministers of religion in England have had access to the attention of the nation in a greater degree, probably, than at any previous period. This may, perhaps, be attributed partly, and even chiefly, to the example of the Court influencing the habits



and demeanour of society. It seems to me that the most appreciable results for which religious teachers can fairly claim a share of credit consist in a greater urbanity and refinement of manners, more decorum in language, and some abatement in the public exhibition of vice and profanity. They have also assisted in promoting the extension of public and private benevolence and charity. But I doubt if such extension has been more than proportioned to the augmentation of the national wealth within that period ; which, according to statistical returns, appears to have been prodigious. The increased manifestation of benevolence towards the poor and suffering is partly owing to prudential motives, in view of the growing self-assertion of the masses in regard to civil and political rights ; which self-assertion, in its well-ordered aspect, springs from the light diffused by the Bible concerning the relations of man to man. The ministers of religion have not exercised much salutary influence on the operations of trade, commerce, or other kindred enterprises, as regards a scrupulous adherence to equity and honesty ; nor is a larger amount of conscientiousness to be discerned generally in the public and private transactions of life. There is more outward homage given to religious observances by the middle and higher classes, and the number of religious publications is becoming almost incalculable. Yet it is to be feared, that although decorous plausibilities meet the observer on every hand, and appear to be almost impressed on the prevalent type of

visage and voice, he must search with careful, and often with laborious, scrutiny to discover strong intellectual convictions and earnest moral feelings. He will find very pleasing appearances springing from a nice sense of expediency, in regard to worldly advantages, and a delicate appreciation of social conventionalities ; but will seldom hear the great principles of truth, equity, and kindness appealed to, as of paramount importance in the management of public or private affairs.

I suppose the ministers of religion never enjoyed a greater degree of personal respect and consideration than in our days. They are, as a body (speaking of England), exemplary in their lives ; they manifest zeal and application in the discharge of their duties ; and their ministrations are well attended by the middle and higher classes. Yet they seem to make but little impression on the intellect and heart of the nation ; their efforts to check a growing tendency to doubt and unbelief appear almost unavailing ; and, even among their own order (including only those who appear pious and intelligent), there are serious differences of opinion, not only on subordinate but on vital points, which differences are too often exposed with an acrimony but little calculated to promote the cause of Christianity. It would not be just to charge them with a greater share of responsibility for such lamentable circumstances than fairly belongs to them. Every intelligent lay Christian must bear his proportion of culpability. Ministers of religion are carried along by prevalent currents

of thought, in the internal movements of their own minds—at least to some extent—in spite of the ossifying influence which the study of systematic theology must produce on intellectual flexibility, and from which I suppose only some exceptionally happy natures can escape. Yet their freedom for the bold and earnest investigation of truth is checked by the stern rigidity with which the Christian world maintains the doctrine of finality in creeds; more especially perhaps in regard to the repulsive dogma that the great scheme of mercy only contemplates the welfare of a portion of the universe. John Foster did not believe in the eternal duration of depravity and misery, and gives his reasons in a letter written in 1841 to the Rev. E. White. He adds: ‘A number (not large, but of great piety and intelligence) of ministers within my acquaintance, several now dead, have been disbelievers of the doctrine in question; at the same time not feeling themselves called upon to make a public disavowal; content with employing in their ministrations strong general terms in denouncing the doom of impenitent sinners.’ I suppose that scarcely anyone will allege that the reticence of those good men was calculated to advance the cause of truth. There is no conceivable mode of removing prejudices and errors except by an open and temperate exposition which may be considered and discussed.

It seems to be generally admitted by intelligent observers in the religious and literary world, that theological convictions of a definite and earnest

nature are declining among the educated classes, and that the opponents of Christianity are acquiring increased strength and influence. I submit that this is chiefly owing to erroneous interpretations of Scripture, in regard to some of the most important questions. I have no doubt that our age is better qualified to appreciate the great truths of Christianity than any previous one. But we are acting inconsistently. We are putting new cloth on an old garment, and expect to find congruity in its aspect. In this very century we have discarded many erroneous notions, which were handed down to us, by a long succession of ages, on matters deeply interesting to human welfare. Yet we are endeavouring to retain other great errors, of a kindred though still more important nature, received by us from the same source. There is a sense of incongruity and incompatibility produced, though apparently not clearly discerned, which is assuming a menacing aspect towards Christian faith; but, I believe, it will lead, before long, to clearer and more comprehensive views. The ethical parts of the Gospel have become better understood, in their bearing on human relations; and we have, after full and lengthened discussion, recognised as indisputable that our ancestors held many erroneous views on those topics. Yet, strange to say, there is no section of the Christian Church which seems prepared to admit, even the bare possibility, that serious misconceptions may also exist in regard to the dogmatical parts of the Gospel.

Most Christians evidently suppose, that neither natural theology, nor that which is drawn from the Bible, ought to be regarded as a progressive science. The creeds and catechisms recognised by different churches imply, even when they do not distinctly avow, the idea of finality. Some of the most influential churches are constructed and organised on the assumed basis of finality; and there seems to be great dismay among ecclesiastical as well as political dignitaries, on account of the impracticability of securing a perpetuity of unquestioned authority for human systems and institutions. The general prevalence of such ideas has, I believe, proved a great obstacle to the correction of errors and the development of enlightened sentiments. Macaulay, in one of his Essays, says, that 'in divinity there cannot be a progress analogous to that which is constantly taking place in pharmacy, geology, and navigation.' He adds that the Volume of Revelation 'is equally open to all who, in any age, can read those books; nor can all the discoveries of all the philosophers in the world add a single verse to any of those books.' In close connection with those paragraphs is the celebrated sentence: 'A Christian of the fifth century with a Bible is neither better nor worse situated than a Christian of the nineteenth century with a Bible, candour and natural acuteness being of course supposed equal.' I beg to submit that these are very inconclusive assumptions. We cannot add any verses to the Bible, but we may understand those

which are contained therein better than our fathers. Philosophers and men of science have not added a single leaf to the great Volume of Nature; but they have deciphered the inscriptions on its pages far more clearly than their predecessors. Improvements in astronomy, chemistry, and general physics lead not only to progress, but to altered views in geology. In like manner the more enlightened ideas we have, as to the relative position and distinct capabilities of physical force and moral influence, are leading us to clearer and more accurate opinions, in regard to the nature of the Gospel Remedy, and the meaning of the scriptural declarations respecting the purposes of the Creator towards His intelligent creatures. I ought, perhaps, rather to say, that they are forcing us to correct serious misconceptions, under the threatened penalty of intellectual and moral disorganisation.

I think it is a great error to suppose, that a Christian of the fifth century was as well qualified to comprehend the Gospel plan of salvation as one who lives in our day. The best and most intelligent men in those ages were so much imbued with false maxims and principles, and so greatly influenced by injurious customs and practices, as to render it extremely difficult for them to enter into the spirit of the Gospel. There was much that was admirable in the distinctive features, mental and moral, of the Grecian and Roman; and many fine traits of character were exhibited by the nations regarded as barbarians. Still, their most

elevated conceptions, in respect to the relations of God to man, were quite different from those unfolded in the Sacred Volume, and they had very narrow-minded views concerning the relations of man to man. The introduction of Christianity produced a great change in their ideas respecting the Creator, but did not radically correct their tendency to deify humanity, which is a great obstacle to progress in the knowledge of God. This tendency was nominally relinquished by them, while, in reality, it only assumed a modified form, by the substitution of saints, with almost divine attributes, for the demigods and inferior divinities of their predecessors. They admitted the great truth, made known by Christianity, that all men are brethren; but it exercised very little practical influence on their feelings and conduct. In order to make progress in the knowledge of God we must enter heartily into the spirit of that important and elevated declaration—‘God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.’ The Reformers were also too much imbued with the ferocity of their age to comprehend the Gospel plan of salvation. They were, perhaps, scarcely more qualified to do so than Christians of the fifth century. We occupy a more favourable position in that respect, which, I firmly believe, is owing to the free circulation of the Scriptures during the last three hundred years.

I propose to refer to some of the instances in which we have made great changes in the opinions handed down to us by our ancestors. I shall

endeavour to show that we owe those important modifications of sentiment to the enlightening influence of the Sacred Volume, but that they are not in harmony with the views held by Christian churches on the dogmatical parts of the Gospel. If those points can be established, I think I shall be warranted in drawing a strong inference, that the views held by Christian churches on the dogmatical parts of the Gospel are not correct; that is, in respect to the extent of the Gospel Remedy, and the mode of its operation, for the welfare of intelligent beings.

A hundred years ago, few persons considered slavery to be iniquitous, debasing both to the enslaver and enslaved, and opposed to the principles and spirit of the Gospel. Our ancestors were not shocked by the extreme rigour of the criminal code, in applying the penalty of death to almost every conceivable offence. Their opinions as to the most patriotic mode of conducting international relations have been in a great degree abandoned; and scarcely any person would now venture to affirm, that one nation can be really and substantially benefited by injuring or overreaching another, although in former ages it was one of the principal aims of statesmen to realise such a purpose. We have ideas very different from those which prevailed even last century, concerning the just prerogatives of rulers, the responsibility of governments, and the rights of the masses. There are now, comparatively, few advocates for the employment of coercive measures against opinions,



however obnoxious to the ruling powers, or even to the nation at large. Former generations relied almost entirely on physical force to regulate political questions, and to repress and extinguish social evils. We have witnessed its inability to establish permanent results in political arrangements; and the sentiments uttered by Daniel Webster in 1824, and by Lord Palmerston in 1829, have been in some degree confirmed by recent events. The former said, in support of Greek patriotism, 'Moral causes come into consideration in proportion as the progress of knowledge is advanced; and the public opinion of the civilised world is rapidly gaining an ascendancy over mere brutal force.' The latter expressed similar opinions in a speech on Portugal, from which I will quote one sentence, extracted from 'Hansard:' 'There is in nature no moving power but mind, all else is passive and inert; in human affairs this power is opinion; in political affairs it is public opinion; and he who can grasp this power, with it will subdue the fleshly arm of physical strength, and compel it to work out his purpose.' We are becoming convinced, by observation and experience, that prisons and scaffolds, or any other application of physical force, can do but little to check and diminish crime, and render no assistance in dealing with the subtle ramifications of vice. Our notions in regard to efficacious measures of repression are very different from those entertained in bygone epochs. Even human culpability does not present

the same aspect as it used to do. We have a wider range of information, and are able to trace causes and consequences in a far more minute and extended manner. A growing, though still rather vague, suspicion oppresses us, that the responsibility for vice and crime is not confined to the actual transgressors. We perceive that those who are themselves enlightened, that those who have wealth and influence, may do much to diminish the sources of social evils, and to mitigate the sorrows and temptations which aggravate them. We can no longer punish harshly, with the undoubting confidence felt by our fathers in the justice and propriety of such a course. Far more enlarged ideas also exist concerning the ties which bind the human family, and produce mutual dependence and reciprocal influence between individuals, between different classes of society, and generally throughout the whole assemblage of races and nations in the earth.

There may not be more real kindness, honesty, and love of truth in our days than in some of the periods to which reference has been made. But we certainly have a clearer intellectual perception of the respective properties and capabilities of physical and moral force. Our daily experience affords more vivid illustrations of the tremendous agencies of Nature, and of man's capacity to control and employ them, than the philosophers of former times were able to conceive, even in their most sanguine moments. Yet the inapplicabilities of physical force have become

more distinctly visible to us than to our ancestors. We have found it inoperative in durably implanting any species of opinion, or in guiding currents of thought. We have found its decisions in political matters soon liable to be set aside, and have witnessed how superficial are its attempts to cure, or even to check, social evils. We have discovered the vastly superior efficacy of moral force for such objects, even in its silent, unobtrusive energy, to the most imposing apparatus which physical strength can display. This discovery is modifying the character of international relations, the form and action of governments, and the organisation of the social fabric.

We are better able than our forefathers to have some clear and consistent apprehension in regard to the nature of the kingdom of Heaven, and the real and practical value of the principles which our Saviour and His Apostles inculcated. The Old Testament legislation restrained the unjust use of physical force, while it permitted and regulated its employment, with stern and strict justice, for punishing offenders and repressing crime. Our Saviour prohibited the use of physical force by His followers, even as a means of self-defence against unprovoked injuries. But He furnished other weapons for those objects, and the Apostles amplified and elucidated His declarations, indicating that those new weapons, and they alone, are really efficient against outward acts of evil, because they operate upon the sources from whence they spring. To such declarations

a very partial and limited signification has always been assigned; and good, well-meaning men continued to advocate the use of the old weapons. But the experience which has been accumulating, enforced by the steady manifestation of those truths in the Sacred Volume, which has been freely circulating over an important part of Christendom, has at length awakened a glimmering of consciousness that the old, and somewhat rusty, weapons of physical repression substantially and essentially do nothing at all to secure justice, truth, kindness, and purity, or even to diminish vice and crime, because in their nature and intrinsic properties they are as much adapted, and even more so, to produce contrary results. They are fitting weapons for promoting moral error, but not moral truth, as moral truth consists in kindness, gentleness, peace; and they arouse feelings which are adverse to such emotions, and produce superficially good effects through the influence of fear, the action of which is only temporary, and seldom if ever softens and purifies the character. We are beginning to perceive, dimly perhaps, but still with some impressiveness, that the mental and moral weapons to which the soldiers of Christ are distinctly and emphatically restricted, are really efficacious for practical purposes in human life, as well as for the more special objects connected with a future existence. Still, although we are modifying our ideas, and bringing them more in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, there seems to be scarcely

any apprehension of the fact that they have been derived from thence. They are rather attributed to a sort of march or advance which humanity is supposed to make by some undefined or not clearly defined impulses. I feel convinced that the motive power by which all real improvement in human thought and conduct has been produced emanates from the only vital source of truth and light which has been shed upon mankind; and shall endeavour to prove it, or, at any rate, to bring forward strong grounds for supposing so.

Having altered our opinions on the important subjects to which I have adverted, we find in effect (although perhaps with only a dim consciousness as yet) that our modified sentiments are not in harmony with the theological dogmas which we have inherited. Although our confidence in physical force has been greatly impaired, as regards the adjustment of political and social difficulties, we are still required to believe that coercion of the most painful nature, embodying our idea of physical force in its most violent form, will be employed with overwhelming power for the regulation of the deeply momentous questions of eternity. While we are beginning to trace the sources of our social ills and miseries, striving to organise means of prevention and cure, and forming a more compassionate estimate of human culpability, we are told that the great Creator, who encourages and prospers judicious and earnest efforts to enlighten and to reclaim even the most degraded and criminal, will act

*Opinions incompatible with Theological Dogmas.* 31

upon totally different principles, in relation to the destinies of untold myriads. We are acquiring a more impressive conviction than ever before, that strong ties bind the different nations of the earth, and that it is really and truly for the interest of all that each section should advance in well-being and happiness, physical and moral. Yet we are assured that, throughout eternity, countless myriads will be plunged in a depth of misery and depravity too painful for the mind even to think of; while a certain proportion will be raised to ineffable enjoyment, serenity, and rapture, and will actually prosper and be happy, with such fearful facts ever before them. We who, in spite of our selfishness, cannot hear of great misery, even in distant parts of the earth, without sympathetic grief and an irresistible impulse to afford succour and comfort, are called upon to suppose, that those whose characters are purified and elevated will be far less imbued than ourselves with the tender emotions of pity and sympathy. Nay, we are required by those who claim to be the expounders of the Bible to believe, that the great Author of our kindly sensibilities and feelings, who is Himself emphatically called 'Love,' and who has provided such ample remedial measures for the discipline and recovery of His erring, sinful creatures, will only partially apply them, and will leave some, and apparently the greater number, in hopeless, endless depravity, ruin, and anguish, making a distinction between them upon no intelligible principles of justice, mercy, or necessity.

I venture to express the unhesitating conviction, that the incongruity between the two classes of opinions and sentiments, which I have placed in juxtaposition, is so great, that both cannot be held by an intelligent mind with anything like a sense of compatibility. Therein is to be found the chief cause (as it seems to me) of the attacks against Christianity, and the consternation manifested by its defenders. The intellectual opponents of Christianity cannot find in its dogmas, as expounded by the Church, any solution of the dark problems which have always bewildered the intelligent portion of mankind, nor can they perceive any consistency between the modified sentiments of the age in regard to human relations, which they attribute to the deductions of reason, and the statements made by theologians concerning the Divine government, which they naturally suppose have been derived from the Bible. It is astonishing and instructive to observe the effect of long habit, in upholding any species of opinion or practice. I have been much struck on seeing, that men born in a slave community, who were intelligent, kindly in their feelings, well educated, and who had travelled in other lands, seemed absolutely incapable of perceiving the evil features of slavery. They could burn with indignation at the wrongs of Poland, and could sympathise with the grievances of Ireland; but a delineation of the deeper woes of the enslaved in their own country appeared to them, when judged most charitably, a

mere fanatical fancy. In like manner, Christians are accustomed from childhood to hear a certain set of opinions enunciated as undoubted, and their ability to discern their real properties and the foundation on which they rest is not what it would be if called upon to consider a new set of opinions, previously unknown, and to judge them by the principles of the Gospel. Nevertheless, it seems to me that there is a growing sense of uneasiness among Christians, on account of the discrepancy between their ethical and dogmatical opinions. The advocates of Christianity are putting forth cries of distress and discouragement, instead of pressing forward to the defence of vital truths dear to them, with the noble ardour and manly confidence of the early Reformers. If they felt that they could present Christianity as a great and adequate remedy for the disorders, misery, and avowedly hopeless and endless depravity which exist in the universe, they would not manifest so much alarm in regard to criticisms on minor points. But the most intelligent among them are in such a maze of intellectual difficulties themselves, that they evidently do not know how to deal with them, and can only suggest palliatives and compromises. We are so constituted in this age that we cannot honestly and sincerely adopt the words of Bacon: 'The more irrational and incredible any Divine mystery is, the greater honour we do to God in believing it, and so much the more noble is the victory of faith.' The language of



Luther, which I quote from Lecky's 'Rationalism,' is still more repugnant to us: 'Hic est fidei summus gradus, credere illum esse clementem, qui tam paucos salvat, tam multos damnat, credere justum qui sua voluntate nos necessarie damnabiles facit.' We are better qualified, I think, to agree in the sentiments penned by John Foster, more than twenty years ago, in reference to this very topic: 'Goodness, benevolence, charity, as ascribed in supreme perfection to God, cannot mean a quality foreign to all human conceptions of goodness; it must be something analogous in principle to what Himself has defined and required as goodness in His moral creatures.'

I believe there is no real discrepancy between the modern ideas to which I have alluded, and the teachings of the Sacred Volume, in regard to the Divine government; but that the apparent incongruity arises from false interpretations, which in former ages were more consistent with errors on other points than they are now. We have derived from the Bible our improved views concerning human relations, and I feel convinced that they are in complete harmony with the exhibition of the purposes of God towards His intelligent creatures, as unfolded in the New Testament. It will be my earnest effort to prove that such is the case. Before doing so, I shall endeavour to show that the energetic and efficient motive power for the progress that has been made in all that is most valuable in civilisation and intellectual development, has emanated from the circulation of the

Bible during the last three hundred years. Some comments on this subject will, as it appears to me, tend to promote the main objects I have in view; and I have met with no work which clearly vindicates the claims of Christianity in that respect.

I think the writers on modern improvements have not justly estimated the influence of Christianity on the march of human affairs. They confine their notices, almost exclusively, to the action of religious teachers, or that which is called the Church,\* although often, and perhaps always, composed of conflicting elements, part of which are actually antagonistic to Christianity itself. Such writers have contributed much important

\* False metaphors are a fruitful source of human bewilderment and misconception. An amazing amount of mischief has been occasioned by the terms 'our Mother the Church,' 'our Holy Mother the Church.' The Catholics are held in a state of mental darkness and degrading servility by the supposed obligation of implicitly obeying the dictates of what they call the Church, and consider it impious to compare its dogmas and requirements with the declarations of the Bible. The Protestants claim the right of freely perusing the Sacred Volume, and of comparing theological dogmas with its statements. But many of them are greatly trammelled by the supposition, that filial obedience is due to an imaginary body, which they invest with a species of individuality, and dignify with the title of 'our Mother the Church.' Dr. Arnold made the following sensible remarks on the subject: 'That common metaphor about "Our Mother the Church" is unscriptural and mischievous, because the feelings of entire filial reverence and love which we owe to a parent we do not owe to our fellow-Christians; we owe them brotherly love, meekness, readiness to bear, &c., but not filial reverence.' Our Saviour said, 'Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.'—Matt. xxiii. 9, 10.

information respecting the circumstances that have stimulated and promoted intellectual development, the advance of scientific investigation, and its practical application for the welfare of mankind. But I am surprised to find no reference to an influence far more efficacious than any they bring forward. I mean the free circulation of the Bible in England, Germany, and other parts of Europe, as also in the United States. When Guizot, in his 'History of Civilisation,' speaks of the influence of Christianity, he limits himself to the action of the organised and frequently heterogeneous body called the Church, pointing out in how far it was beneficial, and in what respects noxious. Anyone who is acquainted with the New Testament must be aware, that ecclesiastical tyranny finds no sanction in the example and precepts of the Saviour and the Apostles. The injurious conduct of bishops and other clergy is an element of human weakness and imperfection which the legitimate and genuine influence of Christianity tends to counteract, mitigate, and repress. When Guizot reaches the period of the Reformation in the course of his historical review, he makes many admirable remarks, exhibiting the strong and weak points of the Reformers. But he strangely omits to mention the important fact that, since the time of Elizabeth, the Holy Scriptures have been freely circulated in England; and that, besides having the liberty of perusing them in their own houses, and having one or more Bibles for public use in every parish, the people have constantly

heard them read in their own tongue, as part of the religious services, in the Episcopal churches, and other Protestant places of worship throughout the country. This was a new and fresh influence, acting directly upon the laity, and which had never before been experienced. The invention of printing and the improvements in the arts connected therewith, gradually rendered the sacred text accessible to all classes of the community. M. Guizot expresses the opinion that the essential and prominent characteristic of the Reformation was the liberation of the human mind from priestly or spiritual tyranny; although he admits that the Reformers did not always grant the liberty of conscience which they claimed for themselves, and too often employed coercive measures against opinions which they deemed erroneous. While fully recognising the courageous resistance of the Reformers against ecclesiastical despotism, I would submit that the greatest service they rendered to humanity consisted in their having established, upon a firm basis, the right of the laity, of all classes and ranks, to the free perusal of the Bible, instead of having portions doled out at the discretion of the clergy. They established that, not only as a civil right but one in which the ecclesiastical body fully concurred;\* which is an important point, because, if

\* Under the providence of God, the Protestant clergy have never been able to revoke the right conceded to the laity of perusing the Bible, as their own separation from the Church of Rome could only be justified by maintaining that right. But some of them have been extremely arbitrary in their assumptions, and have impeded the ex-

the clergy prohibit the reading of the Scriptures, the great majority of the laity abstain from doing so, which is still found to be the case in France, where the civil power does not enforce the interdiction.

I believe the perusal of the Bible by all classes of the community in England has had an important share in promoting the advance of civilisation. Among the great and luminous truths which Christianity may be said to have actually revealed and discovered to mankind, may be mentioned the brotherhood of nations, and the identity of their relations to the Creator. They were not apprehended by the Jews, and were practically unknown to the Greeks and Romans. The admission to Roman citizenship of persons belonging to other nations was not calculated to produce feelings of the same benevolent and enlightened nature, as it was a token that one nation claimed supremacy over the rest, and regarded them as inferiors. The observation of Max Müller, in his 'Science of Language,' seems to me quite just: 'Not till the word barbarian was struck out of the dictionary of mankind—not till the right of all nations of the world to be classed as members of one genus or kind was recognised, can we look even for the first

exercise of private judgment in the interpretation of the Bible, although admitting it in theory. The ecclesiastical authorities have gone so far as to support the imposition of pains, penalties, and civil disabilities on those who ventured to question the correctness of the creeds, catechisms, and formularies which they prescribed. These trammels have gradually been mitigated and loosened, and will probably be entirely removed during the present century.

beginning of our science. This change was effected by Christianity.' If these two important principles are not felt and practically acted upon, the progress of civilisation must be very slow. It is only the circulation of the Bible that imparts real vitality to those sentiments. They were hailed with gladness when first announced to mankind ; but, in the dark ages, their truth and importance were not realised in any efficient way ; and they would soon be practically lost if men ceased to read the Sacred Volume. That hallowed book contains a living power, to act upon the intellect and the heart, by its declarations respecting the character of God, and its enlightened appreciations of human affairs—by the elevated affections it inspires, and the salutary motives it supplies. I feel convinced that its operation is more effective than any other in originating and stimulating the two constituent elements of civilisation, defined by Guizot to be the development of individual humanity and the development of the social relations.

It seems to me also that, whatever there is of real utility in Rationalism, as regards moral appreciations, or just estimates of the relations of mankind, can be shown to be taught by the Holy Scriptures. No philosopher, nor inventor of any system claiming to promote human welfare, has ever been able to suggest any standard, criterion, or test for ascertaining the relative value of earthly things—any ideal or model for imitation, or any propelling force to act on the motives, to move the affections, or to stimulate to a beneficial line of

conduct, in addition to, or as an improvement upon, the contents of the Bible.

It is, therefore, surprising to my mind, that the writers on modern improvements have omitted to notice the influence of the Bible upon the laity, irrespective of the conduct, whether good or evil, of the professional teachers of religion.—I mean its direct influence on the human faculties and emotions in their relation to the affairs of this life, that being the point of view to which those writers more particularly direct their attention. M. Guizot refers to the revived taste for classical literature in the fourteenth century as an instrument in promoting intellectual culture; and no one will be disposed to question the propriety of his remarks on that point. Yet I think, judging from his general sentiments on the subject of Christianity, that he must regard the writings of David, Solomon, and Isaiah, the benevolent and elevated precepts of the Saviour, and the ennobling maxims and principles laid down by the Apostles, as far more calculated to advance the real objects of civilisation (without taking into view the theological aspect of the case), than the most finished and exquisite productions of Greek and Latin genius, however much and justly admired and esteemed.

Although these writers make no effort to trace the effect produced by the free circulation of the Bible, they furnish information which, I think, permits some estimate to be formed. M. Guizot is naturally desirous of vindicating for France a

conspicuous share in promoting the great work of intellectual development and social improvement. Yet he is obliged, as a writer of intelligent and discriminating candour, to admit that in England, during the sixteenth century, the different orders of society advanced simultaneously and steadily in civilisation, but that such was not the case in France. There, the onward movement was stimulated, not by the united and co-operative, but by the successive and separate, action of the constituent parts of the community. He says that, in consequence of this, the great object of social organisation was attained in England more rapidly than on the Continent; that is to say, the establishment of a regular and free government. To the same causes he attributes the more speedy development in England of national good sense and comprehension of public affairs. He also states that the features which distinguish European civilisation from that of ancient and Asiatic countries were more fully manifested in England than elsewhere. I do not see, however, that he clearly explains the radical and fundamental sources of those differences between France and England.

After making those concessions in favour of England M. Guizot asserts, that France marched at the head of European civilisation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; in the former, by the influence of its government—in the latter, by the social and intellectual influence of the nation. It seems to me that this statement can only be accepted in a qualified manner. Louis XIV.



conferred a lasting benefit on France by uniting the different provinces into a compact whole, and his reign was distinguished by the munificent encouragement of the ornamental arts, as well as by a display of outward refinement and polish such as, I suppose, had never before been witnessed in Christian Europe. M. Guizot eulogises his government for internal strength and diplomatic ability, but acknowledges that he completed the destruction of the ancient institutions of France, and did not plant any others. I would submit that the internal strength of the government was chiefly owing to his personal prestige and his talent in selecting able administrators, but was not perpetuated after him. The useful arts and sciences made no progress during his long reign, as is forcibly shown in the detailed statement of Buckle in his 'History of Civilisation;' the independent efforts of the intellect were systematically repressed; and half a million of the most intelligent and industrious of the community were driven out of the kingdom by his intolerant policy. His reign influenced Europe by his aggressive and ambitious projects, as also by the splendour of his court, and the elegance and refinement of manners which were displayed. But I am at a loss to see, in what way he essentially promoted the two great elements of civilisation which M. Guizot defines to be 'le développement de l'activité sociale et celui de l'activité individuelle; le progrès de la société et le progrès de l'humanité.'

At the end of his reign the French seem to have

been conscious of their inferiority in intellectual progress. Buckle states, in the work to which I have referred, 'During the two generations which elapsed between the death of Louis XIV. and the outbreak of the Revolution there was hardly a Frenchman of eminence who did not either visit England or learn English, while many of them did both.' He proceeds to give a list of the celebrated Frenchmen of that period who became acquainted with England and her writers; and shows, by numerous quotations and references, how much the French literature of the eighteenth century was indebted to the works of Bacon, Locke, Newton, and other English authors. Lecky, in his 'Rationalism,' expresses the opinion that 'it was from the writings of Locke and Bacon that Voltaire drew the principles that shattered the proudest ecclesiastical fabrics in Europe; and it is against those philosophers that the ablest defenders of the mediæval theology have exhibited the most bitter animosity.'

It would appear, then, that in the eighteenth century the intellect of France was greatly indebted to that of England in every department of literature, as well as of philosophical and scientific investigation. The writers of that country exercised a far greater direct influence on the Continent, because their language was generally known, while few persons could read an English publication. Still, under such circumstances, it is not just to say that they marched at the head of European civilisation. Besides, their works on

social and political affairs were calculated to overturn and destroy, and not to reform and improve, as their disquisitions were speculative and critical, but generally very deficient in practical good sense. M. Guizot himself says, in regard to their writings, 'Jamais la philosophie n'a plus aspiré à régir le monde, et ne lui a été plus étrangère.'

If M. Guizot's assertion is to be understood as chiefly referring to the influence of French society on the advance of European civilisation, it must also, I think, be accepted with reserve. The example of the Court during the Regency and the reign of Louis XV. was of an extremely deleterious nature, and the habits and pursuits of the nobles were frivolous to an extraordinary degree. This is abundantly shown in the memoirs and autobiographies of Frenchmen and Frenchwomen who lived at that period. Then, again, De Tocqueville, in his work on the state of society in France before the Revolution of 1789, gives a frightful description of the hatred existing between different classes. The nobles, although as a body destitute of political power, held the most unjust and oppressive social privileges. In regard to the middle classes, De Tocqueville says: 'Instead of uniting themselves closely to the lower orders, to struggle in common against a common inequality, they only sought to establish fresh injustices in their own favour.' Such a state of society was not well qualified to exert a beneficial influence in promoting the real elements of civilisation, either

within its own immediate sphere, or in other lands.

In making these remarks, I do not claim for the English any comparative merits. I believe the innate qualities of the French are equal to those of the English, and in some respects superior. But I cannot help being struck by the development, in one country, of national good sense, which, in spite of many blunders and much awkwardness, manages to arrive at practically useful results; and the deficiency in the other country, of 'le bon sens national, l'intelligence des affaires publiques.' Why should a brilliant and generous people be unable to secure the permanent acquisition of that which M. Guizot justly terms 'le but de toute société . . . . un gouvernement à la fois régulier et libre' ? Why should their eloquent writers still have to complain that their rulers treat them as children, and make the welfare of France depend more on the happy accident of individual sagacity than on the enlightened application of general intelligence, with its salutary checks and adequate discussion ? Why do they remain powerless to assert their rights as men, not by fitful impatience and violent movements, which provoke reaction, but by a steady manifestation of a capacity for self-government, and united action in useful directions, independently of judicious inspirations from the central authority ? I have seen no satisfactory explanation of this mysterious problem, and venture to submit some ideas which have presented themselves to my own mind,

and which are closely connected with the illustration of the line of argument I am attempting to unfold.

Whatever other differences may be noticed between the two countries, there is one which has existed for three hundred years. The English people of all ranks have been reading the Bible; the French, as a people, have remained almost as ignorant of its contents as their ancestors. If the Bible contains a revelation from the Creator for the good of mankind, its free circulation and perusal must be attended with beneficial results, of which those who slight and neglect it deprive themselves. Some nations have been debarred from its perusal by honest though unintelligent bigotry, and by the interdiction of the ecclesiastical authorities supported by the civil power. The French pride themselves on their freedom from bigotry, and are not easily deterred by prohibitions from intellectual investigations. Any culpability, therefore, which attaches to the neglect of the Bible has been incurred by them more than by any other people. As far as I am aware, all the countries in which the Sacred Volume is known and read are in a happier condition than those in which it is suppressed, or practically disregarded, by the masses.

Modern French writers sometimes taunt the English with an exaggerated reverence for the Bible. They would be startled, I think, if they could clearly discern the injury inflicted on their country by the supercilious indifference of some, and by the admission, on the part of others, of the

fatal doctrine that it is not advantageous for the people to have access to its pages, except under the guidance of priestly discretion. I believe that, in consequence of this, they, although so preeminent in brightness and acuteness of mind, and so well fitted to assume the initiative in great movements, have been deprived of the salutary influences they need to moderate the defects which impede the action of their brilliant qualities. They have lofty and generous aspirations, but are not equally endowed with a breadth of view which apprehends possibilities, as well as opposing obstacles, in their just proportions, and inspires a steadiness of aim calculated to ensure useful and permanent results. Their noble ardour, when not judiciously guided, too often leads to consequences which provoke reaction, and are followed by discouragement and subsequent inertia. I believe, if the French mind had been as much imbued as that of England with a knowledge of the Bible, that nation might have been the intellectual leader of Europe, in paths of safety and of moral as well as mental elevation. It is sad to think that the civilised world has been deprived for so many centuries of any practical advantage from the fine mental qualities of the Italian and Spanish races, or the subtle and delicate perceptions of the Greek and Oriental intelligence, in reference to the most important topics of human research. In consequence of this deprivation, and the neglect of the Bible in France, the steady but rather dull faculties of the Anglo-Saxon intellect have been almost

unaided, and very little controlled, in the modern efforts to interpret the Scriptures, except by the valuable analytical exertions of German scholars and divines. But it seems to me, that the latter are less qualified to take enlarged and comprehensive views of important subjects than to scrutinise their component features, and seldom rise to a wide range of vision, through a clearly discerned vista of general relations,—of man to man, and of the universe to the Creator. The Anglo-Saxon intellect is steady and vigorous, well fitted to deal with hard facts, and to grapple with physical difficulties; but I suppose it must be considered deficient in the sympathetic and expansive properties of the imagination, and too apt to measure all things, whether relating to this world or the next, by narrow analogies, which scarcely permit conceptions and appreciations of an enlarged nature.

I believe that good sense and solidity of judgment will be increased among any people who read the Bible; and that its influence checks the selfishness of classes as well as of individuals, and tends to inspire just sentiments in regard to inter-community of interests. It not only instructs us respecting our spiritual relations to God, but affords maxims and estimates concerning human relations and earthly affairs, more sagacious and more practically useful than are to be obtained from any other source. It gives us principles which are applicable to the solution of all difficulties between man and man, and which are

operating with steady, quiet, but potent energy, to modify and correct that which is opposed to justice and benevolence. It imparts a sense of duty and responsibility, leading to earnest perseverance of effort, whereby opposing obstacles, otherwise invincible, may be gradually removed. I believe it can be shown without much difficulty, that the acquisition and conservation of civil and political, as well as of religious, liberty in England have been intimately connected with the free circulation of the Scriptures among the laity. If the French had enjoyed the same influences in a direct manner, they would have been prompted by well-balanced impulses to reform and improve, instead of violently overturning the framework of society; and would have applied great principles in the way best suited to their national characteristics and tendencies. I believe also, that if the Irish people had been enlightened by the perusal of the Bible, they would long since have obtained a redress of grievances and a happier position in all respects. The state of that country is a disgrace to the intelligence of England, and is avowedly dangerous to the interests of the empire.\* But I am struck by the absence of clear views among patriotic Irishmen, in regard to the sources of the misery which afflicts their country. If they had vigorously applied their minds to the difficult subject, they might, before this, have

\* Since these remarks were written, the British Legislature has given its serious attention to the accumulated ills and deep-rooted animosities which have proved so injurious to Ireland.



produced an exhibition so forcible and convincing as to have enlightened the minds of their own countrymen as well as of the English community, and might have aroused an amount of public sympathy which would have compelled the legislature to adopt practical measures of justice and good sense. The persevering efforts of the Anti-Corn Law League convinced a great statesman of past errors, and induced him, in spite of strong opposing obstacles and personal sacrifices, to reverse the policy which he had honestly defended for many years. But even the most earnest-minded Irishmen appear to be incapable of such patient, steady, and intelligent exertions on behalf of their afflicted country. I think the direct perusal of the Bible would have implanted a deeper sense of personal responsibility, under such painful circumstances, than seems to operate on the warm-hearted, impulsive, and generous sons of Ireland.

An English writer, on 'Civilisation considered as a Science,' laments that 'in this enlightened century, and when civilisation has advanced to its present condition, the influence even of the Christian religion, whose ethics are so pure, and whose doctrines are so refining and so ennobling, should not have exercised more extensive sway, both in the affairs of state and over the minds of men, than the influence of Paganism appears to have achieved.' I cannot see the cogency of such remarks, which seem to indicate a great misapprehension of the subject. I feel convinced (as I

have already stated) that the progress of enlightened ideas and the march of civilisation are mainly due to the unobtrusive but efficacious operation of Christianity, as instilled into the minds of the people by the perusal of the Bible. Paganism, when its influence was salutary upon the masses, dealt merely with the external outbreaks of evil; but too often it lent the sanction of recognised authority to that which was oppressive and injurious. Christianity may be reproached with having acted in a similar way if we regard ecclesiastical organisations as its legitimate representatives. But, if we seek its essence and its genuine manifestations in the Holy Scriptures, we may trace its powerful though quiet energy in the course of events which have transpired since they had access to the different classes of the community in an important part of Christendom. Some writers have said, that Christianity has added nothing to Aristotle's ethics, although it has made men practically more moral. I would submit that there is an immense difference, both in the range of virtues inculcated, and in the class of motives called into exercise. The ethics of heathen writers refer almost exclusively to the conduct, and do not direct attention to the thoughts and feelings as the springs of action, and the radical sources of evil. They are, in fact, arguments addressed to men of intelligence and natural good tendencies, calculated to strengthen their resolutions in pursuing a certain course as most fitted for their own happiness.

But, I think, the arguments adduced, although just and well put, could have had scarcely any effect on men of strong passions, even if intelligent, except to make them cautious as to the mode of gratifying evil inclinations, in order to avoid the inconveniences attending an open display of them. The ancients, under the teachings of Paganism, 'did not easily recognise evil to be evil; and they did not believe, or rather they had never dreamed, that it could be cured.' In the ancient heathen world 'there were not more than one or two, if any, who besides being virtuous in their actions, were possessed with an unaffected enthusiasm of goodness, and, besides abstaining from vice, regarded even vicious thoughts with horror.' I have made the preceding quotations from 'Ecce Homo,' and will add the following just and beautiful sentiments in regard to the teaching of Christ: 'A new continent in the moral globe was discovered. Positive morality took its place by the side of negative. To the duty of not doing harm, which may be called justice, was added the duty of doing good, which may properly receive the distinctively Christian name of Charity.'

I am surprised that the author of 'Ecce Homo,' although entertaining many luminous ideas, does not perceive that our Saviour absolutely condemns physical force, as being unfitted, not only to correct intellectual and moral error, but even to restrain and repress the injurious conduct of men. Nor does he seem conscious of the fact, that our

age is becoming practically impressed with the truth of that important lesson. He says that the resolution by 'ardent champions of some great cause' to 'lay waste a continent and exterminate a nation,' if they should deem it necessary, in pursuit of a noble object, might be shocking, 'but not therefore unchristian.' He appears to sympathise with the spirit that produced wars of religion, capital punishments for supposed speculative error, and even *autos da fé*. He evidently loses sight of the memorable rebukes, administered by Christ, to ardent champions who had 'a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.' In one case he said, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of;'\* and in another, 'All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.† The Apostle Paul enumerated the fruits‡ of the Spirit and the works of the flesh in his epistles. It would be difficult to imagine that a Christian could be prompted to deeds of blood, under the influence of the hallowed emotions which are mentioned, although they might spring very congenially from the sentiments and feelings which are reprobated by the apostle. I think it can be said with truth, that the effort to repress intellectual error by physical violence is a practical absurdity, because it can only be done by arousing the action of moral error, such as strife, malice, hatred, which feelings are naturally and almost inevitably produced by the employment of physical violence.

\* Luke ix. 55.

† Matt. xxvi. 52.

‡ Gal. v. 19-23.

Recurring again to the writers on Civilisation and Rationalism I would remark that, among the services they are rendering to Humanity, there is one akin to the benefit which Socrates sought to confer. They expose the weaknesses, errors, and inconsistencies of those who have long been regarded as almost infallible oracles. They attack the collective opinions forming the code of our modern King Nomos, whose behests we have been taught to reverence from our earliest infancy, although many of us can give no better reason for unquestioning assent than the fact, that those opinions were inculcated on us by those who received them from their predecessors. The unsparing criticisms upon those venerated authorities unsettle men's minds it is true; but this is better than a slavish or indolent acquiescence in opinions without a genuine and earnest effort to understand their nature, and the basis on which they rest. Even the direct assaults and covert insinuations against the Sacred Volume will produce wholesome results by stimulating to intelligent, vigorous inquiry and investigation. Under such a process the minds of Christians will gradually lay hold of the real bearings of the important topics in agitation, instead of continuing to float in vague, confused, misty notions, which afford no stability or firmness, but occasion timidity and hesitation, causing men to be 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine.'\*

\* Ephes. iv. 14.

As far as I understand the nature of Rationalism, it does not profess to furnish any effective moving power to Humanity. It rather assumes the functions of a judge, to pronounce on the merits of past and present opinions, customs, and practices. It disturbs and destroys cherished illusions, but affords no substitutes to replace them; unmindful of the grave fact, that every illusion which the human mind entertains springs from an effort, mistaken but sincere, to satisfy a real want in man's nature. There is a deficiency of candour and explicitness in the Rationalistic School, and I think it is impossible to derive from its teachings any definite ideas concerning the most important topics. Religious emotions are alluded to as beneficial, but dogmas are generally represented as injurious, although no explanation is given as to the mode in which religious emotions can be produced without an intellectual basis, that is, a belief of a definite nature acting on the affections in an intelligible manner. I presume Rationalism does not pretend to assist Humanity in forming any distinct ideas concerning the Creator and Upholder of the universe. I suppose it cannot be called a philosophical system, or indeed a system of any kind, but simply a practical action on the maxim that no opinions or dogmas ought to be received by intelligent men, until they have been scrutinised by their reason and found true. It seems to assign no limits to the capabilities of reason, and neither to acknowledge a revelation from the Creator, nor the necessity for it. It

appears to assume that man is able to discover all that is requisite for him to know, without attempting to explain the grounds for such an assumption. I can perceive no hints in its teachings, in regard to the process by which man is to derive any knowledge as to whether his existence terminates with this life; or, if not, what destiny awaits him beyond the portals of the grave. There are sharp criticisms on the tenets held by Christians respecting a future state, but no alternatives are suggested. It professes (and, I doubt not, sincerely) a great regard for morals, but furnishes no other basis than expediency; as Mr. Lecky states that 'utility is perhaps the highest motive to which reason can attain.' As far as I am able to perceive, Rationalism acknowledges no principle of intellectual authority except the reasoning faculty of every intelligent man; and the only standard for morals is utility, viewed in regard to the convenience and well-being of the present life, and without considering the possibilities of an immortal existence, and the relations of man to his Maker. It follows, I think, that the highest and noblest aspirations of Humanity are not met, and are even scarcely noticed by any influence emanating from Rationalism. It is not surprising, therefore, that its most distinguished English apostle, after enumerating the benefits which he believes Rationalism to have conferred, closes his work with melancholy forebodings as to its probable course and tendencies.

I offer these comments on Rationalism (although

necessarily in a very imperfect way) because it appears to me the form of attack on Christianity which is most seductive to the Anglo-Saxon mind. It brings forward an imposing 'array of interesting facts which are the idols of Englishmen;' and so groups and disposes them as openly or covertly to assail the general reverence for recognised intellectual authorities, which is another deeply rooted English characteristic. This is useful in so far as it may tend to liberate the mind from a servile and blind veneration, and to enforce vigorous enquiry and intelligent discrimination. But we ought not, as men of sense, to lose sight of the important reflection, that the domains accessible to the investigation of reason are limited. The past history and present condition of mankind prove abundantly that our reason is incapable of ascertaining and defining the relations and duties of the human race to the Creator; is scarcely competent to establish any beneficial and impressive convictions respecting His attributes and character; and totally unqualified to acquire information concerning a future state of existence. Although Positivism seems to glory in the wisdom of those who confine their researches to objects connected with the present life, I can hardly suppose that the generality of thinking men will ever succeed in repressing and extinguishing the thoughts and emotions which seek a wider expansion and a loftier elevation.

It seems to me that the English phase of Rationalism derives its chief strength from the



incongruities and inconsistencies of the theological systems which are inculcated by those who profess to be the exponents of Christianity, and that its rejection and depreciation of the Bible is mainly owing to the impression that those systems are legitimately based on its teaching. Those of its disciples who conclusively and finally disclaim the authority of the Sacred Volume must, I think, be gradually transformed into adherents of Positivism or Materialism. I do not believe it is possible, in our age, to infuse into human nature that class of religious emotions which Rationalism vaguely suggests and seems to approve, although, in so far as I can discern, without indicating the basis or the means for their acquisition. Nor is the practical English mind adapted for such a process of religious teaching as intellectual Spiritualism endeavours to instil; and the efforts it makes to convey a knowledge of God, and of His relations to men, without admitting the authority of the Holy Scriptures, would, I think, have still less success in England than they have obtained in France, where much distinguished talent has been expended in the elaboration of its principles and deductions. I have but little knowledge of the American form of Spiritualism, which seems to be based, not on a process of intellectual reasoning, but on supposed mental impressions and sensible communications from the invisible world, some of them apparently of a very grotesque nature. If the English are to have any religion at all, it must be founded on a

belief in a revelation from God ; and I feel convinced that no branch of the human family will ever derive religious thoughts and emotions of an impressive, beneficial, and permanent nature, by the efforts of human reason pretending to act independently of a Divine revelation.

I have endeavoured, in these introductory remarks, to bring forward considerations for supposing that the schemes of doctrine held by those who are called orthodox Christians are seriously wrong. The solemn and impressive fact that Christianity has not essentially extended even its nominal sway over the earth since the early ages succeeding the advent of our Saviour, affords a strong proof to my mind that the Gospel is not really proclaimed. The acceptance by educated persons, in the most enlightened countries professing Christianity, of philosophical systems which practically deny even the existence of God, leads to the almost irresistible inference that the luminous truths which Revelation presents to mankind have been perverted and distorted by those who ought to be ' the lights of the world.' If it were not so, the incoherent fantasies, the incongruous vagaries, the one-sided and misshapen theories, ignoring the noblest attributes and aspirations of Humanity, which are put forth with confidence by men of intelligence and learning, as well as with apparent earnestness and sincerity, would have no intellectual standing-place in Christian communities, and would indeed be as

impossible as an attempted revival of the ancient astronomical fallacies.

I have also referred to the modified views which have been gaining ground in our age concerning the applicability of physical force for the adjustment of political difficulties, the repression of supposed error, and the abatement of social ills and plagues. I have endeavoured to show that our altered opinions, as well as the general advance of civilisation and intellectual development, are mainly owing to the free circulation of the Bible since the period of the Reformation. I have tried to prove that our modern ideas on those important points are in complete harmony with the principles and precepts of the New Testament, but hopelessly at variance with the systems of theology which are professedly held.\* I have also slightly suggested (and shall endeavour more fully to illustrate) that the confused and perplexing views put forth by theologians concerning the Divine character and purposes, which cloud and obscure the elevated attributes of rectitude and benevolence, not only impair earnest convictions, but are exerting a baneful influence on the morality of the age, particularly in regard to the operation of conscientiousness, and the vigorous action of the love of truth and equity. These impressive facts and

\* Macaulay says in one of his Essays, 'The really efficient weapons with which the philosophers assailed the Evangelical faith, were borrowed from the Evangelical morality.' I beg to observe that the philosophers have, in reality, been assailing perversions of the dogmas of the Gospel.

considerations furnish additional evidence, of much strength to my own mind, that those theological systems are wrong.

I am still more confirmed in such inferences and convictions by observing many indications in the literature of the age, the general tone of sentiment exhibited, and even in the style of preaching most in vogue, that the theories in regard to the destinies of the human race, and the purposes of the Creator towards His intelligent creatures which our forefathers received as undeniable, no longer obtain the hearty acquiescence of any class of society, rich or poor. Still they are nominally held by all the churches called orthodox; and, although seldom distinctly and vividly brought forward, have neither been relinquished nor replaced by a clear, comprehensive, well-defined manifestation of the great plan of mercy and recovery, which is emphatically called ‘good tidings of great joy.’ We are at present evidently in a state of transition, and are threatened with mental and moral disorganisation, if unable to lay hold of a chain of great and elevated truths, which may satisfy the intellect, and may operate with freshness and vigour upon the heart.

## CHAPTER II.

IN the preceding chapter I have endeavoured to diminish some of the formidable obstacles which seem to render it almost hopeless to induce the Christian world of our time, even so much as to listen to the opinion that the benevolence of the Creator is as illimitable as His own immensity, and that His purposes of mercy and goodness embrace all His intelligent creatures, with a practical efficiency which will accomplish the permanent welfare of the whole universe. In doing so I have incidentally touched on some of the evidences which are convincing to my own mind, that the Bible contains a revelation from the Creator in regard to the most important truths which can occupy the human intellect. But, as the attempts to discredit the authority of the Sacred Volume are numerous and varied, and as I wish to submit my views to the opponents of Christianity, as well as to those who acknowledge its Divine origin, I propose to enter more fully into the arguments brought forward by objectors. I think the adoption of this course will enable me to introduce and develop the opinions I hold in regard to my main topic, in a manner more

gradual, clear, and complete. Besides, as I believe that the Bible is the great depository of intellectual and moral light, and the most important instrument employed by the Holy Spirit in the process of illumination and sanctification, an attempt to vindicate its pre-eminent claims to human attention appears indispensable for the fulfilment of the objects I have ventured to set before me. I make no pretensions, except to present some of the reflections which have produced strong convictions in my own mind.

The generality of men have neither leisure nor opportunity to enter on minute critical investigations, to acquire a competent knowledge of Oriental languages, or to examine with detailed scrutiny the conflicting opinions concerning the authorship of the different portions of the Bible. Such questions are very interesting and important, but, I think, they do not much affect the essential features of the argument, which happily are accessible to every man of plain understanding, in whatever station of life he may be found.

It seems to be an undoubted fact, denied by no one, that the Books of the Old Testament were collected together long before the beginning of the Christian era, and were recognised by the Jews as a revelation from God; and that the Books of the New Testament, as well as of the Old, have been regarded as bearing the seal of Divine authority by Christians of all sects and denominations from the times of the Apostles. But the Jews do not acknowledge the New Testa-

ment as a message from God ; they have always borne their testimony against it, as being a proclamation of a false Messiah. We have consequently two sets of witnesses on behalf of the Old Testament, who in other respects disagree in an essential manner. The absence of possible complicity between them, the persevering and unalterable attitude of the Jews in regard to Christianity, as well as the remarkable circumstances of their history from the advent of Christ to the present time, furnish, as it appears to me, much additional strength to the evidences for the truth of the Bible as a whole.

When we examine the Old Testament we find that the writers do not exalt the founders of the Jewish race, but freely expose their weaknesses, errors, and crimes. They never minister to the pride of kings, but criticise them with impartial rigour ; they do not seek to strengthen ecclesiastical rule, or the predominance of any sect or party ; they never at any time flatter popular prejudices or passions. All these writers whose claims as messengers of God are recognised deal in an equally unflinching and impartial manner with the failings and misdoings of every class of the community, high or low, lofty or humble, numerically large or small, exhibiting an entire absence of bias, prejudice, or partiality. They exalt God alone and His authority, from the commencement of the whole series of books to the very end. It is of little consequence to my mind who were the authors of those writings when I

attempt to realise the wondrous and unparalleled nature of the contents, the like of which was never seen on earth.

It is a marvellous and impressive reflection that the Hebrew race, although manifesting much perversity and frequent disobedience against the tenour of those Writings, seem never to have evinced any doubt that they were messages from God. They often reviled and ill-treated the messengers, and sometimes put them to death; they had many false prophets, who spoke to them smooth things in the name of other gods; they often turned aside from the worship of Jehovah. Yet they venerated those wonderful Writings, which are the record of their guilt and folly, and are filled with denunciations of calamity and woe; delineating with stern, unvarnished simplicity the weakness, meanness, cowardice, and ingratitude of themselves and the idols of their race. Why, under such circumstances, have these Writings been preserved during so many ages, without even the interpolation of extenuating and soothing passages? To what causes are we to attribute these facts, if we regard them as being merely under the operation of the ordinary range of human motives and inducements?

There is a tendency in our days to depreciate the early teachings of the Old Testament. This is partly owing to the surpassing excellence of later communications, particularly those of the New Testament; so that, 'even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by



reason of the glory that excelleth.' (2 Cor. iii. 10.) But this depreciation arises chiefly from a deficiency of careful examination and intelligent appreciation. Although the Mosaic dispensation cannot be compared with that of the Gospel, as regards the mental, moral, and spiritual light diffused, yet it was of the most important character, not only in its action upon the Jews, but on the welfare of a large part of the ancient world. It is impossible for us adequately to realise the ideas, customs, and practices of those frightful ages, the worst features of which were evidently displayed among the Canaanites, the unhappy descendants of an accursed sire, from whose unruly, fierce, turbulent spirit no tender and benignant influences had been transmitted. David, who was well acquainted, by painful experience, with their hideous habits and usages, was able to appreciate the inestimable benefits conferred on his own countrymen by the law of Moses. In reference to those very books, now treated slightly by shallow-minded critics, he exclaimed, 'The entrance of Thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple. . . . Oh, how I love Thy law! it is my meditation all the day. . . . The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' Those who strive to comprehend the circumstances of David and his times, will sympathise with the heartfelt admiration and reverence he displays. They will be grateful for the beneficent wisdom which has afforded a

graduated method of instruction for the benefit of mankind ; always enlightening the intellect, elevating the thoughts and affections, and preparing the mental and moral capacities for fuller manifestations of great truths.

The benefits conferred on the world by the laws of Moses and other parts of the Old Testament have been impressively set forth by various authors. In the 'Court of the Gentiles,' by Gales; 'The Obligations of the World to the Bible,' by Spring; the 'Commentary on the Laws of Moses,' by Michaelis; and a work on the Pentateuch by Dean Graves, numerous proofs are presented in support of that interesting fact. Among later writers, the commentaries of Wines on 'The Laws of the Ancient Hebrews' are worthy of attentive perusal; as also a work called 'The Influence of the Mosaic Code upon subsequent Legislation,' by J. B. Marsden, solicitor. The evidences they bring forward seem to render it extremely probable, if not absolutely certain, that 'the ancient legislators derived their systems, directly or indirectly, from Jewish sources.' Grotius, Bochart, Stillingfleet, Selden, Usher and others were of opinion, that profane literature is greatly indebted to the Sacred Scriptures.

Palestine was a central point in the ancient civilised world. The Phoenicians were contiguous to the Jews, and, in Solomon's time, they had the most friendly relations with them. They occupied the sea-coast and sent forth numerous colonies to Greece, Africa, and some of the islands in the

Mediterranean. The arts and sciences flourished among them, while the Greeks were still in a barbarous state, and the most ancient Grecian philosophers had Phœnician masters. 'Up to the period when the empire of Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, Europe had remained to a great degree sunk in barbarism and ignorance. At this time part of the Jewish nation was carried captive to Babylon, and another large portion took refuge in Egypt. . . . About the time of the Babylonish captivity, Greece began to emerge from the depths of ignorance in which her people had hitherto been sunk. . . . Thales, Anaximander, Pythagoras, Plato, Herodotus, and a host of other Grecian philosophers and historians travelled into Egypt, Chaldea, and Phœnicia, some of them residing in those countries for a long series of years.\* Grotius says, 'The most ancient Attic laws, whence in aftertimes the Roman were derived, owe their origin to Moses' laws.' 'Minos brought laws out of Crete into Greece. Crete was a Phœnician colony. . . . Diodorus Siculus alleges that Lycurgus and Solon, as well as Pythagoras and Plato, gained most of their wisdom and knowledge out of Egypt. . . . Eusebius asserts that Pythagoras visited Egypt and Babylon at the very time when the Jews abode there in great numbers.† 'Clemens Alexandrinus styles Plato "the Hebrew philosopher." . . . Justin Martyr affirms concerning Plato, "he drew many things from the Hebrew fountains." . . . Tertullian said, "I am fully per-

\* Wines.

† Marsden.

suaded that Holy Writ is the treasury of all following wisdom." . . . Plato himself said, "What the Greeks receive from the barbarians they put into a better form or garb." \* Multitudes of the Jews settled in Egypt, and the Hebrew Scriptures were translated into Greek, and became a subject of study in the famous Alexandrian School more than two hundred years before the Christian era.

If we examine the laws of Moses with care we may become convinced that the cradle of liberty was not in Greece but in Judea, or rather among the Hebrews even before they came into Palestine. The laws of Moses established political equality. All free citizens had a share of landed property, which is the natural foundation of power. The executive government was controlled by legislative assemblies of two kinds, and similar institutions were implanted, both in the provinces and in cities. Wines enumerates, among the fundamental principles of the Hebrew code—civil liberty, political equality, an elective magistracy, the responsibility of public officers to their constituents, a prompt and cheap administration of justice by the institution of judges over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, with the right of appeal; the encouragement of general industry, making labour honourable; † universal education, through the instrumentality of the Levites, who were scattered throughout the country, and were not permitted

\* Wines.

† Psalm lxxiv. 5: 'A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.'

to hold landed property. Measures were also ordained to prevent an excess of wealth and an extreme of poverty.

The nation was at first governed by supreme magistrates called judges, whose office was apparently not hereditary but elective. Although sometimes designated through the ecclesiastical or prophetic authority, the concurrence of the people was essential to the validity of their title. It will also be observed, that the first kings, although anointed by prophets, did not exercise their sovereign rights until the people had sanctioned the election. Wines remarks concerning the earlier form of government: 'If anyone will attentively read over the Book of Judges, and take the trouble to compare the times of oppression and adversity with those of independence and prosperity, he will find the duration of the former less than one-fourth of the latter. . . . Under their government the nation enjoyed periods of repose, happiness, and plenty, of which the history of other nations affords but few examples.' But the people, owing to various causes, became weary of that form of government, and desired a change, for which Moses provided, under Divine guidance, so that it might be effected without internal convulsion. (Deut. xvii. 14-20.)

I cannot pretend to enter on those interesting topics. But I would remark, that the whole world was benefited by the establishment of the Jews in Palestine, so that it was a measure of enlarged benevolence and not of partial favour-

itism. The Canaanites had become so corrupt that their influence was wholly evil; and the remnants of them, who were driven to the sea-coast, were forced by a confined territory to send forth emigrants to other regions, who carried with them some salutary elements of legislation and ethics, acquired by being in contact with those who possessed a Divine revelation. We find that, under the providence of God, many nations have been dispossessed of their lands and have been succeeded by others. But in scarcely any instances have such changes occurred, except as a consequence of the vices or incapacity of the previous occupants. Thus the Roman Empire was overrun by hordes from the North; the continent of North America has come under the sway of the vigorous races of Europe; and the rule of Great Britain has been established over India.

Bishop Colenso, in his work on the Pentateuch, makes some criticisms on the laws of Moses as not being worthy of a Divine origin. In order to understand the benevolent and *progressive* nature of those laws, we must do that which Max Müller, in 'Chips from a German Workshop,' recommends as indispensable for the correct appreciation of the religions of Paganism. We must try, as well as we can, to enter into the religious, moral, and political atmosphere of the ancient world. Wines, in his Commentaries, shows very forcibly that the laws, now regarded by some critics as trivial and undignified, were aimed against practices which may appear unimportant and harmless

to us, but which were intimately\* connected with idolatry, the gigantic evil of those times, and the fruitful source of corruption and depravity. In reference to the alleged inhumanity of the Mosaic code he says, 'It will be found on examination, that there were but four classes of capital offences . . . treason (against the Divine Ruler), murder, deliberate and gross abuse of parents, and the more unnatural and horrid crimes arising out of the sexual relation. And all the specifications out of these classes amounted to only seventeen; whereas it is not two hundred years since the criminal code of Great Britain numbered 148 crimes punishable with death.' Quoting from Spring's 'Obligations of the World to the Bible' he adds, 'No injury simply affecting property could draw down upon the Israelite an ignominious death.' The 'lex talionis' was not introduced by Moses; he found it firmly implanted in the mental habits and convictions of men. He modified its application by forbidding private vengeance, and making it the duty of a legal tribunal to award and inflict the punishment. He also permitted the injured party to compound matters; and it apparently became so customary to do so, that Moses found it necessary to restrain the practice in the case of deliberate murder, by the statute, 'Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer.' (Numbers xxxv. 31.) Wines justly remarks, that, not long

\* Even in our own times, the wearing of certain colours, forms of dress, and arrangement of hair have been, and still are, employed as symbols of political and party feelings. Modern governments have sometimes deemed it necessary to interfere in respect to such matters.

ago, British jurisprudence went far beyond the Hebrew formulary of 'an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth,' by exacting the life of a man for a sheep, or even for the value of a few pence. In relation to the tolerance by Moses of polygamy, slavery, capricious divorces, and other evils, Wines observes, 'If a perfectly wise man were now to receive full authority to legislate for China, would he frame a code of laws for the government of that empire irrespective of the ancient customs, cherished opinions, and deep-rooted prejudices of the nation?' He cites the declaration of Niebuhr: 'The secret of great statesmen is the gradual development and improvement of the several parts of an actual constitution; they never attempt to raise an institution at once to perfection.' Wines adds: 'Shall that be charged as imposture in Moses, because he claimed to act under a Divine guidance, which would be honoured as consummate wisdom in a Solon or a Numa? . . . Weigh these circumstances in a just balance, and cease to wonder that Moses did not slay at a blow the whole brood (of social evils), and to argue thence his fraud and charlatanry. . . . Mark the gentle but efficient skill with which he takes out their sting, restrains their excesses, mollifies their rigours, and almost reverses their properties.' Our Saviour said, 'Moses, for the hardness of your hearts, suffered you to put away your wives.' But the benevolent precepts and maxims of Moses checked such evils, by enlightening and softening public opinion, and prepared mankind for the



more spiritual and benignant principles revealed by the Prophets and in the Gospel. We find scattered throughout the Pentateuch, detached, pithy axioms and maxims, which were calculated to humanise and enlighten. The yearly festivals, which brought the people together from all parts, also contributed to form the national mind, and to correct barbarous notions and practices.

Bishop Colenso endeavours to show that the Israelites could not have gone armed out of Egypt; that the march out of Egypt could not have been effected in the way described in the Book of Exodus; that the Israelites could not have been protected against the rigours of climate in the desert by any conceivable means, nor found sustenance for their cattle; and he presents many other objections against the sacred narrative. But, so far as I see, he does not deny the great facts, that the Israelites left Egypt as an entire body, marched through the wilderness, and dispossessed the powerful\* nations of Canaan of their territories; nor does he attempt to explain those facts by any hypothesis of his own. I believe they cannot be explained on any other principles than by recognising the reality of

\* The ruins of ancient towns in the country south-east of Damascus called the Hauran are of a remarkable structure, and indicate that the men who built them must have been possessed of great strength. They are supposed by some to be the cities of Og, king of Bashan, who was conquered by the Israelites under Moses. But if the half-tribe of Manasseh occupied them for more than a thousand years, their original aspect must have been modified. I suppose the conjecture, that their primitive features still remain must be founded on the difference of architecture between them and towns known to have been built by the Israelites. Among the Cambridge Essays, 1858,

a miraculous interposition. I think no candid person can doubt, that the reality of such an interposition was strongly and ineradicably impressed on the national mind of the Jews, and that the leading events were commemorated by festivals, which were apparently instituted at the very time when those events took place. A critic on the writings of Mr. Maurice (in 'Fraser's Magazine') justly observes, that 'the main facts of Jewish history . . . are, so to speak, an essential portion of the *life* of the Jewish people, and necessary to account for their existence at all.' The veracity of the sacred historians is strikingly manifested in the Bampton Lectures for 1859, by George Rawlinson, the translator of Herodotus. I think anyone who reads his work will admit, that he is justified in saying: 'It has, I believe, been shown, in the first place, that the sacred narrative itself is the production of eye-witnesses, or of those who followed the accounts of eye-witnesses, and therefore that it is entitled to the acceptance of all those who regard contemporary testimony as the main ground of all authentic history. And it has, secondly, been made apparent, that all the evidence which we possess from profane sources, of a really there is one on 'Ancient Bashan and Cities of Og,' by C. E. Graham. He visited those ruins and says, 'We viewed with amazement these massive structures, so unlike any other buildings which we have seen or even heard of. We could not help being impressed with the belief, that had we never known anything of the earlier portion of Scripture history before visiting this country, we should have been forced to the conclusion, that its original inhabitants, the people who had constructed these great cities, were not only a powerful and mighty nation, but individuals of greater strength than ourselves.'

important and trustworthy character, tends to confirm the truth of the history delivered to us in the Sacred Volume. The monumental records of past ages—Assyrian—Babylonian—Egyptian—Persian—Phœnician; the writings of historians who have based their histories on contemporary annals, as Manetho, Berosus, Dios, Menander, Nicolas of Damascus; the descriptions given by eye-witnesses of Oriental manners and customs; the proofs obtained by modern research of the condition of art in the time and country—all combine to confirm, illustrate, and establish the veracity of the writers who have delivered to us, in the Pentateuch, in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles, Ezra, Esther, and Nehemiah, the history of the chosen people.'

Wines shows with much force, I think, that the plagues of Egypt were a vigorous blow aimed against idolatry, as every form of superstition practised by that nation was attacked. The impotence of idols was frequently made manifest to the nations who came in contact with the Jews, and we have occasional glimpses of the convictions which stole in among them to that effect. We may perceive that Balak did not have much confidence in his own gods; and that Naaman as well as Nebuchadnezzar were convinced that Jehovah was the true God. Max Müller, in 'Chips from a German workshop,' says we ought 'to put a charitable interpretation on many doctrines of ancient heathenism. . . . They are not theories devised by men who wish to keep out the truths of Chris-

tianity, but sacred traditions, which millions of human beings are born and brought up to believe in, as we are born and brought up to believe in Christianity.' That is true; and it may be added, I think, that they show the weakness of human reason and the corrupt tendencies of man. There is one consideration which has struck me forcibly. As far as my knowledge goes, the only form of heathen religion among Oriental nations, which has produced really good fruits, is that of Zoroaster, who is supposed to have been contemporary with the Prophet Daniel, and probably in some measure acquainted with the Jewish Scriptures.

When the Israelites quitted the land of Egypt, vitiated and degraded by a long course of cruel, pitiless oppression, they might have been ranked among the most ignorant and debased of the human family. But it seems to me that, at the period of the Saviour's advent, they had acquired, not only far more noble and impressive ideas respecting the Creator, but also a more enlightened and just appreciation of human relations, in civil and domestic affairs, than any other people, not excepting the Greeks and Romans. They were in advance of other nations, in regard to the two constituent elements of civilisation, defined by Guizot to be, the development of individual humanity and the development of the social relations. This must be attributed chiefly to the influence of their Sacred Writings, which were not withheld from the people, although their recognised teachers often perverted their meaning, and dimi-

nished their salutary tendency. It is justly stated in the 'Life and Epistles of St. Paul' by Conybeare and Howson:—'Nor was this religion, as were the religions of the heathen world, a creed which could not be the common property of the instructed and the ignorant. It was neither a recondite philosophy, which might not be communicated to the masses of the people, nor a weak superstition, controlling the conduct of the lower classes, and ridiculed by the higher. The religion of Moses was for the use of all and the benefit of all. The poorest peasant of Galilee had the same part in it as the wisest Rabbi of Jerusalem. The children of all families were taught to claim their share in the privileges of the chosen people.' The sore trials which their patriotic feelings experienced, chastened and improved their character, weaned them from idolatry, and extended their knowledge of men and things. Some of them became acquainted with the literature emanating from the genius of Greece and Rome. But where could they find so much sagacity, and such just estimates in regard to human affairs, as in the Book of Proverbs; or such magnificent imagery, and sublimity of thought, as in their own prophetic writings? Was there ever pathos so tender and touching, or a knowledge so intimate of the wants and feelings of the heart, as the Psalms exhibit? Could the most renowned historians of other lands compare with their own, in simplicity, conscientiousness, and clear, impartial delineation of character, as well as narration of events, unawed by the terrors

of power and station—unseduced by the hopes of favour and worldly gain—unaffected by personal predilections and antipathies, by class feelings and bias, or even by national prejudices?

Those writings, although having in view special primary objects, possess a capacity of universal application and utility. They afford particular and exceptional lessons, in regard to the dealings of God with man; and, at the same time, unfold a progressive series of measures, which when explained by the additional and clearer light emanating from the New Testament, develop a vast plan for the benefit of the whole race of Adam. Intimations are given, from the earliest communications of the Old Testament, to the end that the dealings of the Creator with the Jews did not simply contemplate the welfare of their race. The leading features of their history, the various types and sacrifices, and numerous declarations in the Psalms and the prophetical enunciations, point to the fulfilment of the promise made to Abraham: ‘In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.’ It is impossible, I think, for any one, who carefully and intelligently examines these wonderful writings, the authors of which lived at different intervals during a space of more than a thousand years, to avoid perceiving the indications of a great universal object, which the writers themselves only faintly discerned. The Jews expected that object to be attained by the pre-eminence of their nation, as the ruling power over the earth, under the sway of the Messiah; and we see that the Apostles

shared in the national ideas previously to the death of Christ, and misinterpreted the announcements made by their Divine Master, that the Kingdom of Heaven was come. But when their minds were enlightened, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, they exhibited with clearness and energy the real signification of the types, shadows, and prophecies, under the Old Dispensation, and showed their fulfilment in the life, death, and spiritual rule of the Saviour. This marvellous co-existence of special and universal objects, maintained through many ages, and carried forward by various agents, some of whom had confused notions, and others glimpses of a vast scheme of benevolence, affords to my mind a strong proof of Divine control and superintendence.

The books of Moses communicate two great truths of paramount importance—the unity of the Godhead and the creation of the material universe. The genius of Greece and Rome failed to lay hold of those elevated doctrines with a firm and clear grasp, although I suppose those nations must have had lingering traces of primeval tradition concerning them. The Biblical account of the creation of the material universe has been variously interpreted according to the opinions of different ages in regard to natural science. The theories of scientific men have been undergoing great modifications in the present century, respecting Geology and the Origin of Species; and it can hardly be said that the latest views, in either department, have been incontrovertibly established. We see

that the ideas confidently put forward, not long since, are being abandoned or greatly altered, in consequence of further researches, which are still, confessedly, very limited and imperfect. We have opened some leaves of an immense volume, and have deciphered a few words, here and there, on each leaf. Only a short time has elapsed since any of the geological leaves (if I may so call them) have been investigated, and during that period great changes have occurred in the deductions and conclusions of scientific men from their researches. As soon as a few more words were deciphered on any geological leaf, a modification of previous impressions ensued. Not only so; but fresh discoveries in astronomy, chemistry, and general physics have also modified the ideas which the contemplation of geological remains had produced. It is not unreasonable to suppose, that, during the next fifty or a hundred years, the opinions now held may be altered in many important particulars. These considerations seem to inspire greater modesty and moderation of assertion in the most eminent guides of scientific investigation than were displayed by their predecessors. I believe that those who intelligently and conscientiously study the three great volumes of Nature, Providence, and Revelation will best be able to understand each aright.

After reading various statements, theories, and assertions, it seems to me that the latest scientific views are substantially in accordance with the Mosaic record, at least in regard to many impor-



tant features. The first verse of Genesis may fairly be interpreted to indicate, that the heavens and the earth were brought into existence by the Creator, at a very remote era, not defined. The succeeding verses have reference to great movements and changes relating to our earth, whereby it was gradually prepared for the habitation of Man. The words, 'Let there be light,' may refer, not to the original formation of light, but to its conveyance, through a suitable atmospheric medium, to our earth; at first in a partial degree, sufficient for the early stages of organisation. The reference to the sun and moon need not be understood as announcing the origin of their existence, but the more complete adjustment of their relation to our earth. The Biblical record indicates with sufficient clearness that the organisation of the earth was gradual; the production of vegetable life and of animal existences successive; and the appearance of Man latest of all. There seems to be a striking coincidence between the biblical statement and the deductions of science in regard to the three great periods, during which plants, marine animals, and a more enlarged variety of living creatures were brought into existence. No other religious system, nor the teaching of any ancient philosopher, has ever unfolded such a series of important facts in a manner acceptable to the most enlightened deductions of human intelligence. Whether the term 'day' is to be understood as signifying twenty-four hours, or a period of undetermined duration; and the term

‘evening and morning’ simply means the end of one distinct epoch and the beginning of the next, can best be appreciated by consulting the Volume of Nature and its inscriptions. It is a point of comparative insignificance, in a moral and religious sense, whether certain results were produced in that which appears to us a short interval, or one of immense duration. The great and important lesson for Man, in all ages, is, that the goodly fabric, with its profusion of varied beneficence, has proceeded from the wisdom and power of the Creator. Still the fact of the long intervals employed in the development of physical phenomena, which we are led to believe from the affirmations of science, has its own lesson also, to which I shall have occasion to refer more particularly at a later period. I will at present merely observe that, in earthly affairs, we are apt to be impatient if we do not rapidly obtain the results we seek by any course of action; and our fancy generally connects the idea of instantaneous effects with the exercise of irresistible power. When we reflect on the probability that ages of incalculable length were employed in the organisation of the earth, before the appearance of Man, our fretful impatience is rebuked; and we also, I think, derive an impressive suggestion, concerning the intellectual and moral cosmos, which is being slowly developed, by the almost imperceptible operation of various and partly conflicting causes and influences. If the physical cosmos we

see is (as I believe) a magnificent but only temporary scaffolding, employed in a preliminary stage, during the construction of the nobler cosmos, of transcendent excellency and duration,—and yet our exhausted faculties are unable to number the ages which rolled by during the erection of the scaffolding itself—we may suppose, by analogy, that the whole process for the completion of the real cosmos—the glorious edifice of physical, intellectual, and spiritual grandeur, in their harmonious combination, will occupy an extent of time which our utmost flights of fancy and our most daring efforts must vainly attempt to traverse. The slow and gradual evolutions of physical, mental, and moral development are valuable means of discipline for creatures who are brought into being in a state of entire ignorance, with vast and perhaps illimitable, though untrained, capabilities, and who can only acquire impressive and beneficial knowledge by personal consciousness and experience, which must be the basis for the action of observation and intellectual deduction. They are being fitted for the glorious destiny of an endless, safe, and happy existence, as living souls, distinct personalities, and not ingeniously constructed puppets; not by a forcible or mechanical infusion of knowledge, but by a salutary, indispensable, though often painful process, bringing them in contact with the awful realities of the universe, and developing enlightened free will, by means of gradual and slowly acquired, but indelible, appreciations and convictions in regard to the real pro-

perties of things. We are led to suppose, from the intimations of Scripture, that in a higher stage of human development, new or modified physical organisations and adaptations, suited for the boundless expansion and upward progress of intellectual and spiritual natures, will be conferred by the wisdom and munificence of the Creator. When that portion of the material universe which is within our cognisance was adjusted in its present relative position, and the appearance of Man on the earth added intellectual and moral life to the varied forms of existence successively unfolded, the Creator is represented as resting\* from His labours, by a gracious and condescending figure of speech, designed to give impressiveness to a beneficent institution for the permanent welfare of Man. It may also be designed to indicate that the material universe alone did not give satisfaction to the Creator, who is not represented as resting until intellectual, moral, and spiritual life was introduced into that portion of His widely extending dominions. I think we may derive from this passage an instructive suggestion in regard to the constitution of the real and complete cosmos, of which natural science only contemplates the physical aspect.

The efforts of intelligent and scientific men to investigate the origin of species in general, and the circumstances attending the first appearance of Man upon the earth, must awaken

\* Gen. ii. 3.

interest in every reflecting mind. Some believe in a multiplicity of primordial creations; and others, that there were only a few original simple types, both of vegetable and animal life, which have been slowly developed, during an immense succession of ages, into the varied species and forms which are now existing. Some are of opinion that all the races of mankind sprang from a single pair, which was a distinct creation, apart from other forms of animal life; others, that the originals of each race of men were primordial creations, distinct from each other. Those who advocate the theory of transmutation believe that 'none of the animals and plants now existing were primordial creations, but were all derived from pre-existing forms, which, after they may have gone on, for indefinite ages, reproducing their like, had at length, by the influence of alteration in climate, and in the animate world, been made to vary gradually and adapt themselves to new circumstances, some of them deviating, in the course of ages, so far from their original type, as to have claims to be regarded as new species.'\* Lyell enquires whether the theory of transmutation, if adopted, would not require us 'to include the human race in the same continuous series of developments, so that we must hold that man himself has been derived, by an unbroken link of descent, from some one of the inferior animals.'† He observes that 'in our attempts to account for the origin of species, we

\* Lyell, 'Antiquity of Man.'

† Ibid.

find ourselves . . . . . brought face to face with the working of a law of development of so high an order as to stand nearly in the same relation as the Deity Himself to Man's finite understanding; a law capable of adding new and powerful causes, such as the moral and intellectual faculties of the human race, to a system of nature which had gone on for millions of years, without the intervention of any analogous cause.' \*

These various theories, whether bearing the names of 'Continuity,' 'Progression,' 'Variation of Species,' 'Natural Selection,' or 'Transmutation,' seem to me practically to admit the essential facts stated in the Book of Genesis, which clearly indicates that all other animal natures were in existence before the appearance of man. The only real deviation is in the theory that the originals of each race of men were primordial creations, which seems to be held by very few. It is substantially the same, whether there were a multiplicity of primordial creations of vegetable and animal life, or whether the countless varieties we now see were gradually developed from a few original simple types. The hand of a Creator is indispensable under either supposition; and not only original creative energy, but continuous un-failing supervision and sustaining power. That which is called 'a law of development of a high order' has no meaning whatever, unless considered as the constant, ever-present influence of a presiding intelligent Mind, operating with

\* 'Antiquity of Man.'

wisdom and unceasing energy. Whether man, in his actual form, be a primordial creation, or owe his corporeal attributes to a gradual development from the primordial creation of a simple type of animal existence, the substantial features of the case amount to the declaration in Genesis: 'The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul.' \*

Even if legitimate deductions, from a sufficiently extended course of observations, should lead us to the conclusion that we owe our *physical* origin, under the presiding guidance of the Creator, to a series of transmutations from a very simple type of animal existence, the great and elevating truth would remain untouched: 'And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.' † It may be true that 'many of the gaps which separate the most nearly allied genera and orders of mammalia are, in a physical point of view, as wide as those which divide man from the mammalia most nearly akin to him.' ‡ It may be undoubted that 'we find in the mammalia nearly absolute identity of anatomical structure—bone for bone, muscle for muscle, nerve for nerve—similar organs performing like functions;' § yet the impassable barrier separating man from all other creatures on the earth remains unimpaired. We may admit that man, in the most degraded

\* Gen. ii. 7.

† Gen. i. 26.

‡ Lyell, 'Antiquity of Man.'

§ Quatrefages, quoted by Lyell.

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type of human nature, does not appear essentially distinct, 'by his mental faculties, which, although more developed, are fundamentally the same as those of animals—nor by his power of perception, will, memory, and a certain amount of reason—nor by articulate speech, which he shares with birds and some mammalia, and by which they express ideas, comprehended not only by individuals of their own species, but often by man—nor . . . by the faculties of the heart, such as love or hatred, also shared by quadrupeds and birds.'\* Yet still all these affinities of animal organisation, some resemblances in mental and emotional phenomena, and even the debasing influence of ignorance and of the most brutalising habits, cannot extinguish the immense difference planted by the presence of the 'living soul,' with its capabilities and possibilities. There may be less perceptible difference 'between the highest brute animal and the lowest savage, than between the savage and the most improved man.'† But the brute animals 'are born what they are intended to remain.'‡ Man alone has been empowered by the Creator 'to become the artificer of his own rank in the scale of beings, by the peculiar gift of improvable reason.'§ It may be added, that man alone is endowed with the faculty of variable language, susceptible of inexhaustible modifications, and capable of exercising influences of great potency,

\* Quatrefages, quoted by Lyell.

† Ibid.

† Archbishop Sumner.

§ Ibid.



both for improvement and degradation. Lyell remarks that, although there may be grounds for supposing that the lower animals have an immaterial principle as well as man, 'we cannot imagine the world to be a place of trial and moral discipline for any of the inferior animals, nor can any of them derive comfort or happiness from faith in a hereafter.'\* It seems to me probable and almost certain, that the motive power in all animals is distinct from matter, or immaterial; but I do not think it is indispensable to suppose that all that which is immaterial must be immortal, or that all immaterial essences must be the same in kind. I believe the existence of all creatures, whether immaterial or not, depends on Him 'who only hath immortality,'† and that it would absolutely cease and become extinct, if His sustaining energy were withheld for a single moment.‡ We can observe no indications in the most intelligent of the lower animals of a capacity to acquire 'abstract notions of good and evil,

\* 'Antiquity of Man.'

† 1 Tim. vi. 16.

‡ I am aware that the word in Genesis, translated 'living soul,' is said to be applied to the lower animals. This may perhaps indicate that the principle of life is immaterial in the lower animals as well as in man. But there is an elaborate peculiarity in the expressions respecting man, which, I presume, the translators did not invent. 'The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.' Besides, numerous passages of Scripture indicate the immense difference between the motive power or principle in man and in the lower animals. We know also that, even among the most brutalised savages, may be found men of intellectual power and elevated moral sentiments.

right and wrong, virtue and vice.’\* There is not the slightest reason to suppose that a single individual of the brute creation has ever possessed the faintest germ of the religious faculty, or been capable of entertaining the most remote conception of a Supreme Being. The indications of the ‘living soul,’ with its too often repressed and latent, but never extinguished and destroyed, capabilities of progressive improvement and unlimited elevation, are to be found in man alone, even when sunk in the lowest depths of debasement. The Christian is able to contemplate human nature under an aspect of hope and grandeur, which the researches of science are incapable of discerning. It has been honoured and dignified by the Son of God, who ‘took not on Him the nature of angels;’† but ‘dwelt among us,’‡ ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh,’§ notwithstanding its affinities and resemblances to the lower orders of animals.

Great difficulties are experienced in accounting for the marked and distinctive peculiarities in different races of mankind, under the supposition that the whole descended from a single pair, and that the existence of man on the earth only embraces a few thousand years. The Egyptian pictures, which are reckoned to be at least three thousand years old, portray the Negro and Caucasian physiognomies with contrasts as strong as they exhibit at the present time. Lyell concludes from that and other considerations, that ‘if the

\* Quatrefages, quoted by Lyell.

† John i. 14.

† Heb. ii. 16.

§ Rom. viii. 3.

various races were all descended from a single pair, we must allow for a vast series of antecedent ages, in the course of which the long-continued influence of external circumstances gave rise to peculiarities, increased in many successive generations, and at length fixed by hereditary transmission.\* I think these difficulties may be greatly diminished by inferences drawn from the Sacred Text, and will submit some conjectures which have presented themselves to me, and which, as far as I am aware, are entirely different from any that have been brought forward hitherto.

Whether the original ancestors of the human race were primordial creations, or derived their physical nature under the operation of the law of continuity, progressive development, or transmutation from lower forms of animal life, it seems evident that their corporeal organs resembled in many important particulars those of inferior animals. But, while having a visible relationship to the brute creation in respect to physical structure, as well as sensations, emotions, and instincts, the spirit placed in the human body was of an infinitely superior order to the motive power or principle which animates any of the lower animals, being created after the likeness of God, or with latent capacities to attain a likeness to God. In man, therefore, was exhibited the marvellous combination of a likeness to God in the spirit, and a likeness to brutes in the physical nature: a spirit with unlimited capabilities of elevation, but unable,

\* 'Antiquity of Man.'

while united to the body, to move in any direction, or to exercise any powers, except by means of the physical organisation. The capacities of the spirit, however, were entirely undeveloped, and I presume, when Adam and Eve came into existence, they were completely destitute of knowledge. It was as if two children, male and female, should grow from their birth to maturity in a state of insensibility, and then suddenly awaken to consciousness. I infer that they had no more knowledge than newly born infants, either respecting God, themselves, their relations to the universe, the possibilities and contingencies of the future, the great law of causes and consequences, the inexorable chain of interweaving destinies and influences, the relative nature of good and evil. It is not stated in the Sacred Volume that any information was communicated to them; and I can see no legitimate grounds to suppose that a covenant was made with them by the Creator. We are merely told that a munificent grant was bestowed on them, fettered by only a single restriction, and that a penalty was declared against a violation of the prohibition. There are no comments in the Bible as to the degree of culpability incurred by Adam and Eve in consequence of their disobedience, and the exaggerated estimates of their guilt are entirely of human invention. We may imagine that the organisation of the brain, through which alone in this life the spirit can exercise the powers of thought, was with them of the highest type of humanity, such,

perhaps, as that connected with the body of our Saviour. But, at first, they could do little more than exert the faculties of observation, with a constant liability to draw false conclusions, owing to the utter want of experience in regard to any past facts and circumstances. It seems evident from the sacred narrative that their intellectual powers were only very partially developed. Their trial appears to us of a very restricted, and even trivial, nature. But, in order to estimate it with even an approximation to justice, we must endeavour to comprehend their real position. It appears evident that, although created innocent and with a well-proportioned and vigorous physical organisation, yet their intellectual and moral faculties were so entirely uncultivated, and necessarily so completely destitute of any basis for correct appreciations, that they were liable to the grossest misconceptions. To them it was given to commence the painful process of learning the nature and properties of things and circumstances, not by a forcible or mechanical infusion of knowledge, but by very gradual, and often bitter, personal experience, aided with wise and salutary reticence by the Creator. I believe that not a single lesson received by humanity since then has been lost; but all are recorded, vividly and impressively, in their real and essential bearings. They are all being made available for the discipline of Adam's race, and probably of other orders of beings, in conformity with a vast educational plan, which shall gradually temper and prepare all intelligent

spirits to pass an endless existence with security, happiness, and a constant expansion and elevation of their faculties and powers, so as to rise higher and higher into resemblance to the Divine likeness.

We may suppose that our first parents experienced terrible emotions when their physical condition and their relations to the Creator were entirely changed by the entrance of moral evil. The shock they felt, and the disorganisation of their mental and moral faculties, made a fatal impression on the innate characteristics of their firstborn child. The unrelenting law of mutual influences for good and evil began to operate with its stern, unbending sequences. The fond, but delusive, hopes of his parents concerning him, which the name given to him indicates, and which perhaps almost amounted to idolatry, tended to foster the evil propensities of his nature. After the perpetration of the fearful crime which has rendered his memory accursed, we are informed that 'the Lord set a mark upon Cain.'\* I conjecture that this mark or sign was a change in his corporeal organisation, modifying the qualities of the blood in a subtle way, altering the complexion, and intensifying the fierce preponderance of animal impulse, which had in his case so fatally suppressed the restraining influence of the intellectual and moral faculties. A change in Cain's aspect, so striking and appalling, must at first

\* Gen. iv. 15.

have produced great horror. His children would inherit similar characteristics, combined, it may be, with strength and beauty of form, with almost ungovernable animal propensities, and an intense energy in all that related to physical development, but with scarcely any moral sense, or just and worthy conceptions of the Deity.

I think such a conjecture would enable us to explain the portentous depravity of the Antediluvians better than any that has been brought forward. We may suppose that, in the days of Noah, there were few families whose blood was uncontaminated by admixture with that of the accursed race. I infer that Noah and his wife were descended from the purer stock denominated 'sons of God.' Yet as the name Ham signifies swarthy, hot, black, it may be that an ancestor of Noah's wife belonged to the evil race, or that there was a slight connection with it in her family, owing to which some of the fatal characteristics were reproduced in one of her sons. We sometimes find in families which have even a slight mixture of African blood, that one of the children exhibits some of the peculiar characteristics belonging to it, while no traces are to be seen in the rest. This idea derives additional support from the intimations given in regard to the character and conduct of Ham. But whether he exhibited those physical peculiarities in his own person or not, I infer from the tenor of the Sacred Narrative that he married a daughter of the depraved race, and that thereby the blood of

Cain was transmitted to the new world, though with a modified degree of noxious energy. If there is any truth in these surmises, they assist in accounting for the marked contrasts between different branches of the human family. The supposed descendants of Ham have generally manifested a deficiency of moral qualities, and of the higher intellectual faculties; scarcely any noble and elevating thoughts have emanated from them, and their religious ideas have, I believe, always been of a debased nature. Intermarriages between the descendants of Ham, and those of Shem and Japheth, together with the influences of climate and of local circumstances, may, as it seems to me, explain all the distinctive peculiarities of different races in respect to colour, physical structure, and intellectual and moral tendencies. These conjectures are, I think, fairly derived from the sacred text, viewed in connection with the historical knowledge we possess concerning the various types of humanity. They are also consistent with the great process of discipline, which I believe is being carried on for the universal benefit of mankind. The great change in the organisation of Cain, which I surmise to have taken place, has exercised an important influence in producing an endless variety of human characteristics, physical, intellectual, and moral. It may be that the action of moral evil has been intensified in consequence, but a wider range of exercise is also being prepared for the operation of moral good. I believe the inexhaustible modifi-



cations of thoughts, feelings, faculties, and powers, as well as of habits and customs of life, which have been, and are being, developed among different branches of mankind, will be a potent means of bringing out all the latent energies of humanity—of infusing flexibility and vigour into its intellectual movements, and of giving depth and expansion to its emotional capacities. These diversities have (as I surmise) been originated and increased by the causes I have named, and have also been fostered by the antagonism, division, estrangement, and separation of different races. We have now the commencement of a new era; and I conjecture that the growing intercourse and amicable relations of different tribes, kindreds, and nations will gradually transfuse the distinctive excellences of each throughout the whole, so as to build up the complete stature of Humanity.

It may be objected, that an alteration in Cain's personal characteristics, such as I have surmised, would be of a miraculous nature, and therefore not worthy of credit. I would submit, that it is not more difficult to believe in a modification of physical nature occurring to an individual (of which instances in a mitigated form frequently take place), than in such a transmutation of species as is now advocated by scientific men. Besides, the theory of transmutation, in so far as I understand it, recognises the possibility, and even the necessity, of changes in individuals of species, without which I do not see how there could be transmutation of species. Moreover, the doctrine

of human perfectibility and human degradation, physically and morally, is based on the assumption ~~that~~ such changes may occur, which indeed we may often trace in ourselves and in those around us. I mean changes in personal appearance and physical characteristics—in thoughts and opinions, likes and dislikes, aims and purposes—in almost the whole structure of the man, and sometimes to such an extent that a clear discernment of the constituent elements of personal identity becomes extremely difficult. I may also add, that overwhelming grief, terror, remorse, despair sometimes produce the most amazing effects on the physical, mental, and moral nature of individuals.

I believe, however, that the Divine interposition in regard to Cain produced effects greater than any that have since occurred from violent emotion, and may be regarded as of an exceptional or miraculous nature. But I submit that intelligent men ought not to consider miracles as absolutely incredible. The old argument brought forward by Hume seems to be abandoned. It consisted substantially, as far as I understand it, in endeavouring to overturn human testimony of a particular and distinct kind in support of miracles, by the allegation that men are always fallible and sometimes dishonest, and by an appeal to human testimony, of a general, vague, and superficial kind, on behalf of the immutability of Nature. I do not see how he could deem it consistent with philosophical impartiality to discredit human testimony on one side of the question, and to point

to it with confidence on the other side. We are now told, however, that human testimony of the most unimpeachable character, and even the clear and undoubted evidence of our own senses, would not justify a belief in miracles. Mr. Baden Powell states, in the 'Order of Nature,' that 'It is not the attestation, but the nature, of the alleged marvel which is now the point in question. It is not the fallibility of human testimony, but the infallibility of natural order, which is now the ground of argument; and modern science cannot conceive religious truth confirmed by a violation of physical truth.' The same writer says: 'The very essence of the whole argument is the invariable preservation of the principle of order, not necessarily such as we can directly recognise, but the universal conviction of the unfailing subordination of everything to some grand principles of law, however imperfectly apprehended or realised in our imperfect conceptions, and constituting the true chain of universal causation, which culminates in the sublime conception of the Cosmos.' He also says: 'It is in immediate connection with this enlarged view of universal, immutable, natural order, that I have regarded the narrow notions of those who obscure the sublime prospect by imagining so unworthy an idea as that of occasional interruption in the physical economy of the world.'

I am much struck by observing that, while some modern philosophers reject the supposition, that the great principles of physical order, as under-

stood by them, can be suspended or interrupted consistently with the elevated wisdom of the Creator,—other philosophers are unable to find, in the strict maintenance of that order, even so much as a proof for the existence of an intelligent Supreme Mind. Sir W. Hamilton says, in his ‘*Lectures on Metaphysics* :’ \* ‘The phenomena of matter, taken by themselves, so far from warranting any inference to the existence of a God, would, on the contrary, ground even an argument to his negation.’ He expresses the opinion, ‘that the class of phenomena which requires that kind of cause we denominate a Deity, is exclusively given in the phenomena of mind.’ He says in another place : ‘The phenomena of the material world are subjected to immutable laws, are produced and reproduced in the same invariable succession, and manifest only the blind force of a mechanical

\* I may have misunderstood the meaning of Sir W. Hamilton. But I think I have the authority of Mr. J. S. Mill for my interpretation of his sentiments. Mr. Mill, in his ‘*Examination of Sir W. Hamilton’s Philosophy*,’ charges him with bribing his disciples to accept the doctrine of free will, on the ground of its being the only valid argument for the being of a God. He thus represents the argument of Sir W. Hamilton : ‘The reasoning by which he thinks that he establishes this position runs as follows :—A God is only an inference from Nature ; a cause assumed as necessary to account for phenomena. Now, fate or necessity without a God might account for the phenomena of matter. It is only as man is a free intelligence, that to account for his existence requires the hypothesis of a Creator, who is a free intelligence. If our feeling of liberty is an illusion—if our intelligence is only a result of material organisation—we are entitled to conclude that, in the universe also, the phenomena of intelligence and design are, in the last analysis, the products of brute necessity.’ (Ch. xxvi.)

necessity.' I have never seen any definition of the terms 'blind force' and 'mechanical necessity,' and doubt whether any human being has formed, or could form, distinct and rational conceptions of their meaning. The idea of blind force producing results of exquisite skill, utility, elaborate adaptation, and refined taste, would be received with pitiless sarcasm, in reference to any work which appeared to be of human origin. It is, however, tolerated in reference to works of far higher excellence; and it seems clear that, to some intelligent minds, the contemplation of a physical cosmos alone would fail to convey proofs of the existence of God. Yet, the modern objectors to miracles, if I understand them correctly, appear to regard the physical cosmos apart from any elevated and practical objects which it is to serve, instead of viewing it as a medium for carrying out vast and beneficent purposes, relating to the moral and spiritual welfare of intelligent beings. Mr. Powell charges those who believe in miracles with having 'narrow notions.' But what notions or ideas does he exhibit as to the design of the physical cosmos, which is always to obey complicated principles of law with unswerving precision, while it has connected with it intellectual and moral natures, moving with a lamentable absence of regularity? Does not such a line of argument, if carried to its logical conclusion, virtually question the propriety of locating a being like man on the earth, with his erratic and disturbing influences? By such a process of reasoning, if sound, it might have been shown or

inferred, before the appearance of man on the earth, that no further addition could or ought to be made to its inhabitants, except in strict harmony with the principles of order on which these objectors expatiate so eloquently, and yet so inconclusively.

It seems to me that such partial, contracted views of order are congenial with the red-tape system, which in human affairs manifests more anxiety to uphold a scrupulous adherence to forms and routine, than to promote the essential objects which those forms are designed to serve, and independently of which their value is very limited. The real cosmos can only be constituted when the disorder and confusion which are seen in the intellectual and moral world shall be completely removed, and the sway of truth, adequate knowledge, justice, purity, and benevolence shall be established over the whole range of intelligent creatures. The question of miracles should not be considered merely in reference to the supposed exigencies and requirements of the material framework of the universe, but should chiefly be viewed in relation to those objects of greatly superior importance, apart from which the magnificent physical organisation which we behold above us and around us, is as incomplete, dreary, and essentially void, as the most beauteous human form would be when no longer animated by the spirit, even if untouched by decay and corruption. I am glad to see that Sir J. F. W. Herschel\* expresses

\* 'Familiar Lectures on Scientific Subjects.'

the clear opinion, that philosophy, in its attempts to make out a cosmos, must 'bring the whole of the phenomena, in the three domains of existence (physical, vital, and intellectual), under the contemplation of the mind as a congruous whole.' In doing so, philosophers ought not and cannot exclude man; for, as the author of the 'Reign of Law' justly enquires, 'Does man, then, not belong to nature? Is he above it — or merely separate from it — or a violation of it?' I must admit, however, that if a complete cosmos is never to be constituted, and the existence of disorder and confusion is to be perpetual in the intellectual and moral world, the aspect of the whole question becomes altered, and the objectors to miracles occupy a stronger position in some respects. Even in that case, however, I should fail to discover rational grounds for expecting undeviating order in the mechanical department of the universe, co-existing with endless irregularities in a far higher and more important department.

Some writers speak of the universe as if it were a vast and stupendous machine, constructed originally by the Creator, and then moving on independently, by means of powers and forces of permanent vitality, with which it was endowed. I believe such ideas spring from a false analogy. A machine constructed by man may move independently of human oversight, because the fabricator adjusts a motive power, with restraints and regulators, so as to produce a certain result, by availing of forces and properties in matter which were

neither given nor are upheld by man. But those forces and properties must be upheld by an ever-present, vital energy, and could not be maintained without it for a single moment. The Scripture declarations, 'By Him all things consist'\* and 'In Him we live and move and have our being,'† convey an idea which has been accepted by 'many of the most eminent of those who have combined the consideration of the material world with the contemplation of God Himself.'‡ Whewell quotes Newton in reference to the action of the Supreme Being as 'of a powerful, ever-living agent, who, being in all places, is more able to move the bodies, within His boundless, uniform sensorium, and thereby to form and re-form the parts of the universe, than we are, by our will, to move the parts of our own bodies.'§ He also quotes Dugald Stewart, Pope, and Herschel, and gives his own opinion very clearly, that, without the presence and action of God, the laws of Nature can have no efficiency, and not even any existence. I am aware that, when we clearly recognise the great truth, that we absolutely and indispensably depend on the Creator for the continuance of our being, and for the power to exert any of our faculties, the mind is led into fields of speculation where it encounters difficulties and enigmas which will probably never be solved by human intelligence in this life. The Pantheists, in pondering on this vast and mysterious subject, arrived at conclusions

\* Col. i. 17.

† Acts xvii. 28.

‡ Whewell, *Bridgewater Treatise*.

§ *Ibid.*



which, perhaps, cannot be overthrown by metaphysical argument, but are confuted by practical tests and great facts. The disputes between the Necessitarians and the advocates of Free Will have never been conducted to a decisive issue, because great facts and practical tests are found at variance with a course of reasoning which, in its speculative form, appears invincible. The Sacred Volume distinctly recognises the great truth, that all creatures depend absolutely upon God for continued existence. It also, as it seems to me, refers to the great difficulties involved in those necessary and unchangeable relations between God and His creatures ; and indicates that the process we see in operation, and which presents an aspect so dark and gloomy, and so full of disorder and confusion, is for the purpose of counteracting and overcoming them. I mean the great difficulty, amounting apparently to an impossibility, of developing, constituting, and establishing distinct personality, and real freedom of intellectual and moral movement, in creatures who are and must always be absolutely dependent on the Creator for the maintenance of all their faculties and powers, and even for the continuance of their being from moment to moment.

It is a striking and impressive consideration to my mind, that, while there have always been, and still are, diversified and conflicting opinions among the guides of human thought, upon those elevated and difficult topics, the Sacred Writers, both of the Old and New Testaments, are found

bearing an uniform and consistent testimony, which, I think, is in harmony with facts, and with the highest efforts of human intelligence. We observe that Pantheists, both ancient and modern, regard all visible objects, all supposed existences, all phenomena, mental or physical, as parts of the Deity, and make no appreciable distinction between the Creator and the creation. On the other hand, some modern philosophers of repute seem evidently to regard the material universe and spiritual essences as sustained by inherent principles of vitality, in the possession of their motive powers and properties, and not requiring the continued, unceasing energy and supporting influence of the Creator. But the Bible represents God as alone self-sustaining, ever-living, 'who only hath immortality,' and all other existences, material or spiritual, as distinct from Him, but always absolutely dependent on Him. Then, again, we see the Necessitarians and the advocates of Free Will disputing as to whether man is a free agent, or under a *régime* of necessity; each party overthrowing the arguments of the other, without being able to establish its own distinctive assertions. But the Bible makes statements which, without explaining metaphysical problems, agree with the facts we find within us and around us, and point to the glorious future result, 'freedom of the will,' which the universal consciousness proclaims to be the inheritance of the spirit, even as the belief in immortality is stamped upon our convictions. It represents man as entering the

world in a state of complete ignorance and weakness, and exposed to conflicting forces for good and evil; but intimates that the object of the stern discipline, under the Divine superintendence, with its wondrously patient reticence, varied influences, and gradual manifestations, is to dissipate error, and to instil real and impressive knowledge of moral good and moral evil, in their relation to our welfare. I think the Bible enables us, by strong inference, to perceive the reasons for a process which appears so full of disorder and confusion in this life; and opens the cheering prospect, that the race of Adam, and all other intelligent beings, will ultimately be delivered from a *régime* of necessity and partial darkness, and become really free agents, 'living souls,' in the clear light of truth, purity, and love. I find that the representations of the Bible produce a salutary impression on my heart, and are satisfactory to my intellect; while the definitions and disquisitions of Pantheists and objecting philosophers are bewildering, unimpressive, and barren of religious effects. This consideration strengthens my conviction that the Bible has come from God.

I am unable to perceive that the credibility of miracles has been invalidated by the arguments of objectors. A man of sense and intelligence may boldly vindicate his intellectual right to measure his belief in a miraculous attestation of the Bible, by the evidence adduced, and by the moral and spiritual interests involved. If he views the subject in connection with the philosophy of the

material universe, it must not be in a narrow-minded spirit, but with an enlarged and enlightened effort to trace the relations of the physical to the intellectual and moral. He will also not forget, that his positive, clearly ascertained knowledge, in regard to the principles on which the 'reign of law' is conducted in the realms of Nature, is very restricted and somewhat confused. We see the operation of forces, to which we give certain names, such as gravitation; but do not understand the nature of the forces, the causes from which they spring, or even whether they are simple or complex. Even the power called gravitation may, it is supposed, owe its irresistible energy to a combination of different influences. Every operation in Nature seems to be 'the result of different and opposing forces, nicely balanced against each other;'\* and the least modification in their relative proportions is attended with a change in the effect. The movements in our own bodies are said to be due to two opposing forces, always ready for action within us, and obeying the least indication of the Will, to put forth such degree of relative and mutually restraining energy as to produce the wished-for effect. The Will orders and is obeyed; but the Intellect understands not the process. We are truly under the reign of law, in matter and in mind; but the nature of the forces in existence—their relative proportions, mutual checks and impulses—the

\* 'Reign of Law.'

regulating medium of adjustment and control, and how employed—are all beyond our powers of comprehension. Still our consciousness and intelligent observation enable us to discern a system in operation, within us, above us, and around us, the contemplation of which ought not to convey the impression of ‘mechanical necessity and blind force.’ The manifold and unnumbered effects, vast or minute, throughout the universe, appear in no case to be produced by the individual action of simple forces, but always by the combination and adjustment of different forces. The author of the ‘Reign of Law,’ who has many luminous observations and illustrations on this subject, justly remarks that the adjustment of forces, so as to produce certain effects, ‘has no meaning, except as the instrument and the result of purpose.’ Viewed in this manner (and I do not see how it could otherwise be viewed), the material universe gives irresistible testimony to the ‘power and Godhead’ of the Creator; and such perceptions, with the natural reflections they suggest, banish the terms ‘blind force and mechanical necessity’ to the region of imbecile though pretentious vagaries. I would also submit, that the aspect of the universe is not favourable to the notions of rigidity, inflexibility, and immutability, with which some modern philosophers invest it. It rather awakens the idea of adaptability to every conceivable variety of effects; and when we see prolonged regularity and delicate precision of movement, resulting from the combined action of stupendous and opposing ener-

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gies, we ought to discern the adamant curb of a mighty Will, guided by elevated Intelligence. We behold indisputable manifestations of the reign of law and order. But our researches have only supplied an imperfect collection of facts—our classification of them is necessarily incomplete—our deductions and conclusions uncertain ; and we are not entitled to pronounce authoritatively in regard to the principles which govern the whole. Our researches never reach the motive power, the spring, the essence of anything whatever. We perceive certain outward manifestations and sequences, and attribute them to specific causes, because, by observation and experiment, we find that they invariably occur when certain circumstances unite or combine. But we do not really comprehend the matter ; we do not see why or how the results are produced ; and the term 'law of nature,' when traced rigidly to its origin, is merely a pompous attempt to veil human ignorance. Our knowledge of the boundary lines between mind and matter is meagre, vague, and confused ; we cannot see distinctly where they blend and where they differ ; a connecting link between them seems to reside in organised vitality, but we have no clear perceptions as to the nature of their relations, and the mode of their reciprocal action. The question of the origin of force is enveloped in inscrutable mystery. Our own internal consciousness points to mind as the moving power of matter ; but the limited scope of our faculties checks our investigations.

I would still make some remarks on the necessity which exists, that, under the circumstances of mankind in this life, the revelation of important truths, which could not be discovered by human research, and which are opposed to human preconceptions and prejudices, should be accompanied by miraculous attestation. Mansel, in his 'Essay on Miracles,' says: 'A superhuman authority needs to be substantiated by superhuman evidence.' The objectors to miracles allege that 'modern science cannot conceive religious truth confirmed by a violation of physical truth.' They assume, upon inadequate grounds, that miracles would be a violation of physical truth, and the argument is destitute of force. The marvels which are strikingly at variance with human experience, and therefore deemed miraculous, may be wrought by the application of laws concerning which we are ignorant, or by a temporary modification in the adjustment and relative action of the forces of Nature which produce the effects we daily witness. I will endeavour to suppose that, in our own days, we had not yet obtained a knowledge of the scheme of redemption, as unfolded in the New Testament, but had recognised the unity of the Godhead, as revealed in the Jewish Scriptures and by the light of Nature. Would it not be indispensable that the revelation of the doctrines contained in the New Testament, if made to us for the first time, should be accompanied by miraculous attestation of a clear, undoubted nature, such as the

mighty works performed by the Saviour? Those doctrines,\* although found completely suited for the wants of the human heart, upon trial and experience are not at first acceptable to the human intellect, in its perverted and erratic condition. The doctrines of the Cross, when originally made known, were 'to the Greeks foolishness, and to the Jews a stumbling-block.† The messengers themselves needed to have their own prejudices dispelled, their faith confirmed, and their courage strengthened in the midst of contempt, contumely, sore persecution, and the prospect of a cruel death by the solemn consciousness of superhuman power, which they felt and witnessed. The marvellous works of the Saviour, wrought in the midst of astute, criticising, and opposing enemies, and which were crowned by His resurrection and ascension, united with His holy, blameless life and beneficent actions to furnish an amount of testimony to His Divine mission, of a more forcible character than any other combination of proofs which the mind can conceive. It may also be said that a miracle awakens the attention of men to the existence and agency of God, in a way far more impressive than the superficial contemplation of the universe, to which mankind generally restrict themselves. That superficial contempla-

\* Archbishop Whately remarks: 'The Apostles would not only not have been believed, but not even listened to, if they had not first roused men's attention, by working, as we are told they did, special miracles.'

† 1 Cor. i. 23.



tion has led to the idea of blind force and mechanical necessity, which appears to me to be equivalent to Atheism. Such an idea is clearly shown to be untenable, when the structure of the universe and the movements of natural forces are examined with minute, intelligent investigation; and as human nature has been endowed with capacities for conducting such investigations, it is justly stated by the Apostle that men 'are without excuse.'\* When we consider the circumstances and condition of mankind in this life, we may perceive that miraculous attestation was extremely important at the first introduction of Christianity, which presented a system of dogmas quite novel to human conceptions, and in a great degree opposed to human prejudices and modes of thought. The internal evidences which the Scriptures afford of their Divine origin, could not be adequately appreciated until the whole series of Sacred Writings was complete. The experimental evidences, from the salutary influence of Christianity on individual character, and on social customs and institutions, could only be unfolded by time, after its reception and growing sway in various communities.

Some writers, and among them Mr. Baden Powell, in the 'Essays and Reviews,' endeavour to discredit the evidential value of miracles by various considerations, quoting also the declaration of the Saviour, that false Christs and false prophets would work signs and wonders. He likewise states that,

\* Rom. i. 20.

as a matter of fact, most of us believe in miracles because they are recorded in the Bible, rather than have our faith in the Bible strengthened by the evidential character of miracles. I think such cavils may be met by a common-sense view of the subject. The working of miracles may not and does not prove the Divine authority of a doctrine. Yet the natural effect they produce is to rouse the attention of men to the messages, when first delivered, which otherwise would make no impression, particularly if opposed to the prepossessions and prejudices of the human mind. Such was the case with the teaching of the Saviour and the Apostles. The language of Nicodemus is the simple expression of the effect which miracles naturally produce: 'No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.' The words of our Saviour indicate other important evidential influences which must co-operate. He spoke of the testimony given by Moses and the Prophets to His Divine mission. He likewise said, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God or whether I speak of myself.' The great fact of the resurrection of Christ was indispensable to prove the truth of Christianity, and is so stated by the sacred writers. When Christianity is firmly established and its doctrines engage the constant attention of men, the internal and experimental evidences are found so strong, that those who possess them no longer require a miraculous attestation. It is owing to this that Christians believe in miracles because

they are recorded in the Bible, for the Divine authority of which they have irresistible evidences of other kinds. But this fact does not diminish the primary importance of miraculous attestation.

I observe with gratification the opinion expressed by the author of the 'Reign of Law,' that 'the question of miracles seems now to be admitted on all hands to be simply a question of evidence.' I suppose he means that objectors have failed to establish the validity of their arguments; and he quotes the declaration of Professor Huxley, that 'denying the possibility of miracles seems to me quite as unjustifiable as speculative Atheism.' Still I think most persons among us do not believe in miracles, as those who have firmly laid hold of the conviction that they were solemn realities; but simply give an indolent, artificial, and unintelligent assent to them, as part of the system of doctrines which have been instilled into their minds from infancy. Comparatively few examine earnestly into the grounds of credibility and the question of evidence, which is owing to the radical indifference of Humanity to the claims of religion on the intellect and the heart. It follows, as a natural consequence, that even superficial, illogical, and puerile attacks on Christianity, if conducted with an air of plausibility and a show of learning ('science falsely so called'—1 Tim. vi. 20), have the effect of causing much perturbation and vacillation of sentiment among a large portion of the community.

The historical books of the Old Testament give

an account of many miraculous events. There seems to be much difference of opinion as to whether we are warranted, with our supposed advance in physical knowledge, in believing that an universal Deluge actually occurred. The difficulties and objections brought forward are certainly of a formidable nature. As far as I understand the matter, they partly have reference to the destruction of the human race, and still more so as regards the lower animals. Men of science believe that variations of species are effected by processes requiring a long succession of ages for their development. The Deluge is supposed to have occurred a little more than 4,000 years ago, which, according to existing theories, is a space of time in which only slight variations of species could have taken place. When the capacity of the ark is estimated, it seems incapable of containing so many representatives of species and variations of species, as to account for the different varieties of quadrupeds, birds, insects, and reptiles which are known and classified at present. A man of science might perhaps admit the miraculous sustenance of the animals in the ark, and the restraining influence preventing mutual destruction. But he is also called upon, either to abandon his theory respecting the extremely slow process in developing varieties of species, or else to suppose that there was an exceptional though temporary modification of that process immediately after the Deluge. This he finds more difficult, as his mind is impressed with the majestic importance of main-

taining with inflexibility the grand principles of physical order as understood by him. I am not competent to judge whether the Hebrew text states, clearly and undeniably, that all the land animals throughout the whole earth perished, nor am I able to estimate what degree of authority the existing theories concerning variations of species really possess. Then, again, the question as to the limits of Inspiration is still in a state of obscurity to many minds, although some express no doubt that it extends to every portion of the Sacred Writings, and even to the form of phraseology and selection of words in regard to all points, whether directly connected with religion or not. I believe an enlightened study of the Volume of Nature may assist us in the investigation of that important subject. But I have no doubt in my own mind, that all the human race were destroyed by the Deluge except Noah and his family. Our Saviour confirmed the great and broad facts of the universal Deluge, as also the Apostle Peter; and it is also supported by numerous traditions among ancient Asiatic nations, European nations, and American nations. Besides, the general features in the history of mankind, in so far as I am acquainted with them (I mean independently of the sacred narrative), seem to indicate that there was a fresh starting-point from Noah and his sons.

When I read the objections urged by Bishop Colenso against the Biblical account of the departure of the Israelites out of Egypt, and their march through the wilderness, I could not but

admit that they were sufficiently strong to invalidate a human narrative of alleged facts, asserted but not proved. If the Jews had become entirely extinct, he might perhaps have also shown, to the satisfaction of his admirers, that they never had any existence at all. But they are irrepressibly alive, and are to be met with in every part of the world. I suppose no intelligent man pretends to deny that their ancestors were oppressed in Egypt—left that country as an entire body—marched through the wilderness—and took possession of the land of Canaan. Can those facts be accounted for in a way more credible than the statement in the Pentateuch? It is to be recollected that the Biblical account is not of a nature likely to be invented by men who were desirous to glorify themselves and their ancestors. The truth is—as stated in a quotation already made—that the leading events of Jewish history, as given in the Bible, are an essential portion of the life of the Jewish people, and necessary to account for their existence at all. Besides, the marvellous, almost miraculous, features of their history have not ceased. The mere fact of their having been driven from their own land, nearly 2,000 years ago—persecuted, ill-treated—and individually having every inducement to conceal their nationality, and yet remaining clearly recognisable in all countries, century after century, even to this day, is, to my mind, quite as difficult to be explained as the Biblical account of the exodus. The impression I derive from such considerations is, that

our poor reasonings, however clear they may appear to us, are not very reliable. 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.' A powerful reasoner on the Necessitarian side may prove, speculatively, that Free Will cannot possibly exist; and a Pantheist may show triumphantly that the idea of human individuality and personality is altogether a delusion. Still a plain, matter-of-fact man, although unable to meet the logical chain of argumentation, cannot help believing that he is a distinct individuality, and that he possesses something like free will. In like manner, if the facts respecting modern Jewish history were not placed beyond the reach of cavil, a committee of savants might bring irresistible reasons to show that their separate existence for 1,800 years, under the circumstances in which they were placed, would be an absolute impossibility. It is the essence of a miracle that there is a conciliation of circumstances which to us appear entirely irreconcilable. 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men' (1 Cor. i. 25). Such reflections as these diminish, I think, the difficulty of believing in the Deluge, even in the face of the most plausible, and apparently the most conclusive, arguments of scientific men.

The truth of the marvellous events in the history of the Jews is impressed on my mind (without coming to a decision as to the extent of Inspiration) by the simplicity, impartiality, and apparent conscientiousness of the narrators; also by the festivals among the Jews, commemorating some

of the most striking of the miracles, and which, as far as I can judge, must have been instituted at about the time that the events occurred. Their truth was evidently stamped on the national convictions of the Jews, and, without admitting their reality, much of their history would be unaccountable. Besides, those marvellous events seem to me to be in harmony with the great plan of discipline and gradual instruction which the Sacred Volume intimates and unfolds. Consequently, from whatever point of view I regard the subject, I find nothing which shocks my mind, or appears to me inappropriate and incredible. That is to say, that when I reflect on the various considerations I have brought forward, I find no difficulty in believing that an universal deluge took place, involving the destruction of the human race; that the history of the Jews was characterised by miraculous events; and that our Saviour exhibited a control over the forces of Nature, and even the springs of human life, far beyond any exceptional manifestations of power that had previously been made. I have never been troubled by such difficulties as those which have bewildered the Bishop of Natal and his Zulu converts. I find myself surrounded by marvels which I cannot explain, both in regard to the processes of Nature and my own organisation. I have been accustomed, all my life, to see effects produced without being able to trace the operation of causes. A miracle is a result produced in a way quite contrary to our experience, and therefore calculated and designed to arrest attention, and to serve as



an indication of Divine interference, of an exceptional character, for special purposes. But, in reality, it is not more incomprehensible to my mind than the effects I daily witness in regard to light and darkness—air and water—the animal and vegetable phenomena—and my own complex nature. If I believe in thousands of inscrutable enigmas, which are producing salutary physical results, in my daily and hourly experience, how can I consistently refuse credence to other marvels, if adequately substantiated, which were evidently designed and fitted to promote objects of a still more important nature, connected with moral and spiritual interests?

We have in the New Testament the completion of the revelation which the wisdom and goodness of the Creator has made to the human race; and the brightness of the latter dispensation presented such transcendent excellency, that ‘even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory which excelleth.’ Yet the books of the Old Testament are found almost as valuable to us as they were to the Jews. I will not attempt to show the benefits which Christians derive from the Psalms and Prophetical Writings, in respect to their devotional feelings; or from the Proverbs, in acquiring sagacity and just appreciations concerning human relations, as there is a general agreement on those points. I will merely express the conviction, that important suggestions may be drawn from the Books of Moses for the guidance of individuals and com-

munities in all ages. I was lately much struck with passages in Deuteronomy xv., which, I think, might aid us in mitigating our social perplexities and difficulties. That chapter enjoins practices of kindness and benevolence which are absolutely unknown among us, and would probably be regarded by many as quite unsuitable for our days. We have learned to rely with an exaggerated confidence on the principles of Political Economy and Free Trade, as if they were in themselves sufficient to regulate the great questions between Capital and Labour, and gradually so to adjust a distribution of wealth as to afford to all a fair proportion of the earth's bounteous supplies, according to their capacities and good or evil conduct. Those principles are, doubtless, of inestimable value, and their adoption by governments, in restricting their own interference, is a happy feature of our times. Yet, as the world is constituted, the expansion of individual liberty must be assisted by the action of intelligent benevolence, whether it spring from a sense of Christian duty, or from enlightened expediency. We may, I think, derive safe and salutary principles from the injunctions of the great Jewish lawgiver, which will not be in any degree inconsistent with our modern tenets of political economy. Let the question of wages be regulated in strict accordance with the unfettered action of supply and demand. But let the rich man recollect, that both Christian benevolence and enlightened expediency require that his increasing wealth be not employed in a narrow-

mind spirit, simply to pamper to the luxurious tastes and indulgences of himself and his family. Such a mode of dealing with an exuberance of riches is an absolute waste, as it neither promotes the real welfare of those who possess it, nor fulfils the obligations of a responsible moral agent towards the community of which he is a member; but, on the contrary, produces an aggravation of social ills. It may, indeed, almost be considered as criminal, when we take into view the wretchedness and poverty of thousands, and tens of thousands, a large proportion of them well-meaning and willing to work. While they endure the extremes of suffering and privation, they behold the wealthy surrounded by everything that can soothe and gratify the senses, and protected even from the most trivial inconveniences by an elaborate ingenuity of contrivances. We can hardly suppose that kindly sentiments are fostered on either side by such contrasts. A rich man, whether a landed proprietor, or engaged in other branches of human industry, is perfectly justified in obtaining labour on the terms which a reciprocal understanding may sanction. But I think the claims of labour upon him, in moral equity and on principles of enlightened expediency, go beyond the question of wages. If his own gains surpass his legitimate expectation of remuneration, he ought to allow to labour some participation in the advantages he has realised through its indispensable and efficient co-operation, by seeking to promote the welfare of those who serve him according to their necessities,

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comparative usefulness, and good conduct. In that way, the frightful contrasts we see of mischievous, enervating luxury, and of squalid, heart-rending misery, would be mitigated, and the whole social fabric would be strengthened by a diffusion of more kindly sympathies and feelings. Besides, capital would not lose by the adoption of such a course, as the energies of labour, mental and physical, would be impelled by a stimulus of a far more healthy and vigorous nature than they receive at present, and work would be done with more faithfulness, skill, and earnestness. I may also add, that the principles of Free Trade must be fairly carried out in a community, if they are to produce well-proportioned results of benefit. If the masses are exposed to universal competition, and deprived of artificial supports, it is not equitable to uphold or even to permit a forcible retention of land, or any other kind of property, by a small number of the population. The Jewish law required a parent to divide his property into portions, according to the number of his children, and to give the first-born a double portion. The injurious accumulation of property in single hands was checked by the right of redemption and the beneficent regulations connected with the year of Jubilee. It seems to me that the compulsory laws in relation to landed property, which have descended from feudal times, can never work harmoniously with the principles of Free Trade; and that the good effects they produce are very restricted, when compared with their mischievous

consequences. The possession of immense wealth by the head of a family is incapable of maintaining the moral influence of an aristocracy; which, as a matter of fact, is mainly upheld by those of its members who have to rely on their talents and character, rather than on their birth and inherited station, for an elevated social position. I believe the frightful amount of misery which prevails can never be materially alleviated by the counteractives which, under the form of charities, flow in a mingled and wide (though inadequate) stream, from varied impulses, of real compassion, vanity, emulation, a sense of expediency, and a homage to conventional requirements; and which are too often doled out with so little discrimination as rather to foster improvidence than to assist conscientious industry under inevitable misfortune. We might with advantage draw suggestions from the benevolent injunctions of the Pentateuch, while endeavouring to combat accumulating ills. The generality of men, even though living in countries professing Christianity, seem to view the relations between Capital and Labour in no other aspect than as establishing the right of capital to obtain the aid of labour as cheaply as possible and the clear right of labour to try and check redundancy by emigration, or any other voluntary redistribution of forces, forgetful that labour has seldom the means of taking effectual measures for such objects. The Mosaic precepts enjoined on capital far more vigorous efforts for the diminution of sorrow and suffering; and we who live under a

dispensation the motto of which is self-sacrificing love, have unfortunately reason to fear, that the course of conduct prevalent among us does not equal in benevolence the practices recognised as appropriate and beneficial under the rule of the illustrious legislator of Israel. The liberality enjoined on the rich towards the poor, in the Sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee, was far more munificent and unrestricted than the partial aid which I have been advocating (Exod. xxiii.1; Lev. xxv. 6, 7, and 10).

I propose to make some remarks on the question of Inspiration, and, in so doing, shall touch on a few of the evidences for the Divine authority of the New Testament which have impressed my own mind. There are, in our days, great differences of opinion in regard to the extent of Inspiration, and there seems to be a growing tendency to modify extreme views. Past errors and present difficulties are owing, I think, in a great degree, to misconceived ideas concerning the real position of the human race in this life, and the essential features of the great Plan of Salvation, as well as the mode of its operation in the midst of conflicting influences, stern discipline, and varying measures of light and darkness, increased or diminished by carelessness, or the earnest sincere efforts of those who seek after truth. Intellectual certainty is not indispensable in our present state of probation. The most important truths are apprehended more fully and intimately, perhaps,

by the moral sensibilities, than by the clear discernment of the mental vision. Our Saviour said that the pure in heart shall see God. Satan, or one who is under the influence of corruption and malignity, can never see God as He is. I do not believe we have just grounds to suppose that there is an equal amount of inspiration throughout all the writings contained in the Sacred Volume; but rather that the measure of Divine influence was proportioned to the importance of the subject, and the degree in which it was removed from the possibilities of human research and cognisance by other means. Nor are we warranted in alleging that, in any case, except such as are definitely indicated, the writer became as an amanuensis, inscribing words which were dictated to him, or delivering a message in a specific and prescribed form of language. It is stated in 2 Tim. iii. 16, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God;' and it is also stated in 2 Pet. i. 21, 'For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.' But we know that the speech of holy men was not always guided by Divine influence, as sometimes they spake unadvisedly with their lips. Such was the case with Moses (Psalm cvi. 33), and with Peter (Gal. ii. 11). Consequently, it is in some degree left to human discrimination to judge which part of their speech comes under the head of prophecy, or Divine teaching, as the word translated prophecy does not signify merely a prediction of coming events. I think the same

may be said of the writings of holy men. Part was what is called Scripture or Divine teaching, and part was not. In some portions of his Epistles, the Apostle Paul seems to be more under the influence of human feelings, than as assuming the attitude of a Divine messenger. The feelings he manifests are honest, warm, natural, and becoming, but still simply human. I may mention, as an instance, 2 Cor. xi. The Evangelist Luke seems to have commenced his Gospel narrative from a sense of expediency and propriety, and not under a consciousness of Divine command. How did the first Christians know which books were to be venerated as containing a Divine message and which were not? No angel descended from heaven, and pointed out those which were stamped with Divine authority. I presume they regarded as such those which were known to be written by the Apostles, or by men, as Mark and Luke, whose writings were sanctioned by the Apostles. Besides, there is an immense difference between the Gospels and Epistles considered genuine and the numerous other writings which were rejected. Translations of those came out not long ago, and comprise about twenty-five. Among them are the Gospel of James, of Thomas, of Nicodemus, and one purporting to be written by Matthew. The Apocryphal Gospels were, I suppose, the production of well-meaning and perhaps pious men, and some of them probably based on conversations with Apostles. But, in the one case, the writers were under Divine guidance and restraint in a



peculiar manner; and, in the other, they were influenced by the crude notions, gossip, and superstitious feelings of the community around them. Thus it appears to me that it was, in a great degree, left to human discrimination, to separate the genuine from the spurious. So also, I think, we have to exercise earnest reflection, with humble prayer for Divine illumination, and to compare Scripture with Scripture, in order to draw out the Divine messages from the writings of those holy men, in their harmonious, salutary meaning. We must use our intellectual faculties, not with arrogance, but with a just remembrance of their defective nature. As we have strong proofs that the Apostles were honest, truthful, unselfish men, we may confidently rely that, when they tell us something which is beyond the reach of our natural capacities, their declaration was made under the solemn conviction of inspiration. The writings of those holy men were intended and calculated to exercise the human faculties, and not to repress intellectual movements, as the Roman Catholic Church teaches. Their design was to correct the perversities of human thought, to subjugate refractory and erratic affections, and to transform moral delinquencies into holiness, purity, and love. When we find that they have such effects on our minds and hearts, we know and feel that they came from God. When they have not, they are to us, practically, no Divine messages at all, whatever loud and angry professions we may make, in regard to a punctilious, superficial veneration of

canonical books, and even of every word which they contain.

I believe the idea conveyed by the word 'Apostle' is, one who is sent, one who has a commission from God. St. Paul designates himself 'an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God; . . . not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ.' In another place he says, 'We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us.' St. James calls himself 'a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ.' St. Peter speaks of himself as 'an apostle of Jesus Christ.' They all felt an ever-present consciousness that they had solemn and exceptional duties to perform, and a deep sense of responsibility weighed upon them continually. They did not utter words and phrases from dictation, but their minds were enlightened to perceive great truths, previously unknown, or but vaguely surmised; and to discern the real meaning and intent of the types and sacrifices in the Mosaic Economy, and the Prophetical declarations, in their application to the Messiah, and their relation to the great Plan of Salvation, designed for the welfare of the whole human race. They spoke and wrote according to the degree in which their own minds were enlightened. I think St. Paul had a more comprehensive and complete view of the scheme of redemption than the other Apostles, partly from his superior intellectual capacities, and also because he obtained a glimpse of its operation in the invisible world. He was permitted, in some measure, to communicate to

mankind the vast and glorious ideas and conceptions which were impressed on his own mind. It seems to me that Paul, and not Peter, must justly be regarded as the chief of the Apostles.\* Whether we view his pre-eminent mental faculties, the extent and importance of Divine communications made to him, as shown in his Epistles, compared with those of Peter; the amount of his labours and their results, as recorded in the Acts and indicated in his Epistles; or the influence which his writings have exercised, and are likely to exercise to the end of time, his supremacy is clearly shown. He himself said (1 Cor. xv. 10), that, by the grace of God, he laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles. St. John was peculiarly fitted, by his loving nature, to appreciate and rejoice in the Gospel message of comprehensive mercy and benevolence to the whole world; although his intellectual discernment may not have been so clear as that of St. Paul, unless, perhaps, at the close of his career, when he beheld the wonderful visions in the isle of Patmos, which he depicted as they appeared to him, but withheld the elucidations which may have been vouchsafed to himself. The Apostles made known the messages which were impressed vividly on their minds and hearts, in their own words; and we may per-

\* I should not consider it necessary, or judicious, to make such comparisons, if it were not for the allegations of the Church of Rome in regard to St. Peter, on which it founds pretensions which, I believe, have inflicted a fearful amount of injury on the intellectual and moral welfare of the human race.

ceive in their style and language, not only the personal characteristics and relative degree of intellectual capacity which distinguished them, but even sometimes the comparative extent of acquired knowledge respecting science and literature. Besides delivering messages by Divine command, or under special influences, they gave their personal opinions, as earnest-minded, holy men, on various subjects of minor, though grave, importance; and their opinions and recommendations are entitled to exercise great weight, as coming from those who had a larger measure of Divine teaching and guidance than any other men.

The Saviour promised that Divine instruction of a more enlarged nature would be given to the Apostles after His death. He said: 'The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.\* . . . He will guide you into all truth.† . . . He shall testify of Me.‡ . . . He will show you things to come.'§ When the Saviour delivered His discourses in the hearing of His disciples, they only had an imperfect understanding of their meaning; and, unless divinely assisted, they could not have reproduced the substance of them correctly. Each of the Gospel narrators seems to have recorded the discourses which produced the most impression on

\* John xiv. 26.

† John xv. 26.

‡ John xvi. 13.

§ John xvi. 13.

his own mind. St. Matthew, although one of the Apostles, while giving us more fully than the others the wonderful Sermon on the Mount and some beautiful parables, omitted other exquisite parables furnished by Luke, and the affecting and tender farewell discourse recorded by St. John. I presume Mark and Luke compiled their narratives from information supplied by the Apostles. There was an ancient tradition that St. John, at the end of his life, approved of the three Gospels, which were written thirty or forty years before, and then contributed his own narrative, which supplied many impressive discourses and other particulars omitted by the three narrators. St. John was peculiarly noted for his personal attachment to the Saviour, and for his benevolent and affectionate nature. It seems to me that, while we have substantial accuracy, with greater conciseness, in the three other Gospels, there is, as it were, a photographic likeness of the Saviour's character and identical style of expression in the narrative furnished by St. John. Some critics allege that there are diversities amounting to contradictions in the four Gospel narratives, when minutely compared with each other. It seems to me that they are substantially identical and harmonious on all important points. I derive from all of them the same impression of the Saviour's life and character, and of the doctrines He taught. We have, I think, no warrant to expect that the Divine influences would render the narrators infallible in their recollection of all

minute circumstances and details. They had certain important missions to perform for the good of humanity, and were divinely assisted to the extent necessary for their performance. They did not write as machines, but, as St. John says, 'That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you.'\* If I should become convinced that there are discrepancies in the Gospel narratives, that circumstance would not weaken my belief in the Divine revelation of important truths to the Apostles, and by them to mankind; or in the substantial accuracy of their delineation of the Saviour's life and character.

It seems to me that we may discern various degrees and kinds of inspiration in the sacred books. 'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.'† 'All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.' ‡ 'God hath set some in the Church, first Apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.'§ We may, I think, observe the operation of influences which chiefly affected the moral qualities of the man, implanting or deepening earnestness, sincerity, strong, practically-working convictions, truthfulness, and a sense of responsibility to God. Such

\* 1 John i. 1, 3.

† 1 Cor. xii. 11.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 4.

§ 1 Cor. xii. 28.

qualities are strikingly manifested in the historical books of the Bible; and we can appreciate their value, by comparing those records with the works of other historians. There were supernatural communications in dreams and visions, vividly stamped on the memory, which were made known to mankind, sometimes with elucidations, and sometimes without them. There were other prophetic thoughts and conceptions, as well as lucid ideas of moral verities, powerfully impressed or infused into the minds of the recipients, to which they gave utterance in the language which their capacities and mental associations supplied.\* Most of the Prophets were men of earnest, sincere, and holy character; but one, Balaam, although having exquisite intellectual discernment of great moral verities, did not love truth and righteousness. Nothing can be more beautiful than his language to Balak, quoted by the Prophet Micah: 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?'† We have reason to suppose that the Prophets had only a partial and imperfect comprehension of the predictions they delivered, particularly of those relating to the Messiah. But it was given to them to be the honoured instru-

\* Plutarch (quoted by Neander) said, in regard to the responses of the Delphic oracle: 'We are not to believe that the god makes the verses, but that, after he has communicated the moving impulse, each prophetess is moved in the way which most agrees with her peculiar nature.' I think this is a better notion of inspiration than many Christian divines entertain.

† Micah vi. 8.

ments of spiritualising the national mind, and elevating it to finer perceptions of 'the weightier matters of the law—judgment, mercy, and faith;' while the priests were sometimes too much engrossed by the inculcation of ceremonial observances. Our Saviour said that John the Baptist was 'more than a prophet;'<sup>\*</sup> nevertheless 'he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.'<sup>†</sup> I presume that, although the Baptist apprehended great truths much more clearly than the Prophets had done, yet that the light which shone upon the Apostles, after the resurrection of Christ, was so pre-eminently superior and brighter, that there was no comparison. They were not required to utter dark sayings, which they apprehended not, or discerned but vaguely, but to declare those things which they saw, heard, felt, and perceived.

There is one reflection which, I think, supplies an argument against verbal inspiration. Neither our Saviour nor the Apostles quote the Old Testament Scriptures with verbal accuracy. They abridge, alter, amplify, condense, and sometimes unite portions of several texts in one sentence. They give us the substance, the life, the spirit, the tendency, but seldom the exact words of even the most important declarations. Would they have done so if they had intended to teach us that the inspired penmen were guided by the Holy Spirit in the choice of language and form of phraseology? Good men may persist in contending for verbal

<sup>\*</sup> Luke vii. 26.

<sup>†</sup> Luke vii. 28.



inspiration, but even if they could establish the validity of that doctrine, irresistible facts would still modify its practical operation. We cannot be absolutely certain in how far we have the exact words penned by the sacred writers. We cannot rigidly estimate the deviations which may have occurred through the carelessness of transcribers. We are often in doubt as to the precise terms in which the original phraseology should be rendered into other tongues. We are, therefore, compelled to look to the general sense, which is to be obtained, not by rigorous deductions from single texts, but by an enlightened appreciation of different parts of Scripture as forming a harmonious whole.

The Apostles who were the companions of the Saviour heard His declarations concerning Himself, without understanding His position towards God and towards men. It was one of the painful trials of the Saviour, with His sensitive, loving, human heart, that, as a man, He was essentially alone, and had no intelligent sympathy, no intellectual companionship and support. His disciples loved Him, and believed He was the Messiah; but had no idea that it behoved Him to suffer and to die. His declarations to that effect sounded strangely to them, and produced no enlightening influence upon their understanding. His death took them quite by surprise, and not only filled their simple and affectionate hearts with anguish, but appeared to them totally inconsistent with the expectations and hopes they had fondly cherished.

They said, 'We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.'\* They thought, as did the rest of their countrymen, that the Messiah would be a triumphant, all-conquering, earthly ruler. Even after His resurrection they enquired of Him, 'Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'† It was only after His ascension that the influences of the Holy Spirit enlightened their minds, and they began to perceive the real nature of the salvation through Christ, and of His spiritual and effective sway over the universe. Even then their first notions were contracted, but gradually they expanded. (See Acts x. 14, 15, 28, 34, 35.) The operations of the Holy Spirit produced effects consistent with their natural capacities and their innate qualities; and it seems clear to my mind that some of the Apostles had far more comprehensive and enlarged views than others. St. Peter evidently found it difficult to enter into the elevated and widely extending conceptions of St. Paul, respecting the vast plans and purposes of God. This is shown, I think, in 2 Peter iii. 15, 16. He speaks‡ of the wisdom given to Paul, and of the things hard to be understood, in

\* Luke xxiv. 21.

† Acts i. 6.

‡ I think it is useful for us to take living flesh and blood views of the Apostles, instead of regarding them as occupying a position so entirely exceptional as to be beyond the reach of human sympathies and conceptions. The sacred writers do not encourage such notions, as may be seen in Acts iii. 12, xiv. 15, xv. 39, Gal. ii. 11-14, as well as in the numerous references made by the Apostle Paul to his own weaknesses, infirmities, struggles, and temptations.

a manner indicating that they went beyond his own plain, sound, but restricted conceptions. It appears to me likewise, that the providential dealings of God with the Apostles throughout their lives were regulated by their previous conduct. Most of them were simple-minded men of blameless, peaceable character, and through them was exhibited the truth of the ancient declaration: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.'\* By the important effects produced through their instrumentality the saying was verified: 'God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.'† As far as I am able to gather from the imperfect records which have been handed down, the primitive band of the Apostles were sheltered from such a continuous, varied series of bitter trials and distresses as accompanied the Apostle Paul throughout his career.

The constant trials and personal sufferings which the Apostle Paul endured, were doubtless made the means of promoting his intellectual and spiritual elevation, and the purification of his character; and he had Divine support and consolation in the midst of his sorrows and humiliations. But they must also be regarded as retributive chastisements, even as the providential dealings of God with Jacob and with David. He had brought

\* Zech. iv. 6.

† 1 Cor. i. 27.

agony and death upon many under the influence of fierce, cruel, though sincere and misguided zeal, and he was made to suffer in like manner. Yet there were many extenuating circumstances to plead on his behalf. He had really and truly believed himself to be what the author of 'Ecce Homo' calls 'an ardent champion of a great cause;' not prompted by personal motives, but resolved 'to lay waste a continent and exterminate a nation,' if considered necessary for the extirpation of that which he deemed a wretched, vulgar, contemptible, but mischievous heresy. He had read and studied the Books of the Law and the Prophets under the teaching of a man of great intellectual eminence, and whose character inspired universal regard and veneration. He shared in the fervent belief and hope of his countrymen, that the Messiah would deliver them from the despised and detested yoke of the heathen—would raise them to pre-eminence—and, through them, would confer blessings on the Gentiles; such appeared to him and to them the clear tenor of the prophetic declarations. What must have been the intolerable sense of disgust, scorn, and indignation swelling the bosom of this earnestly-minded and impetuous young man, animated by such undoubting convictions, drawn from the sacred books, and sanctioned by the most revered authorities of his nation, when he heard men, sprung from the lowest classes, affirming with unblushing audacity, in the dialect of vulgar, ignorant Galileans, that the Messiah so fondly

hoped for, so ardently expected, by a nation groaning and insulted under the iron rod of the uncircumcised—that this exalted Being, this mighty Conqueror, announced, in lofty and sublime strains, by a long line of prophets, was a carpenter's son, who had been recently executed in a way more ignominious than death by hanging is in England! There are strong grounds to suppose that St. Paul had never seen and heard the Saviour. He had probably returned to Tarsus, after completing his education at the feet of Gamaliel, before our Lord made His public appearance, and did not revisit Jerusalem until after the death of Christ, when his associations would naturally be among those whose inveterate prejudices and hostile feelings would distort and misstate everything connected with the life of the Great Teacher. If ever a man seemed imperatively called upon, under the strongest sanctions, and with apparently (to himself) the most undoubted authority, to put down by violence a nascent heresy, abhorrent to the most cherished convictions of a nation, it was Saul of Tarsus. Yet he always refers to his ferocious spirit and conduct, though conscious that it was prompted by sincerity and earnestness, as an evil thing, which weighed heavily and oppressively on all his future life. To my mind nothing can be clearer than that the principles of the New Testament condemn physical force as a means of repressing supposed error, and promoting that which appears to be truth; and that all the experience of mankind

indicates that it ought never to be employed for such objects.

I believe the inspiring and enlightening influences of the Holy Spirit, bestowed on the Apostles, acted on their minds in a way to loosen and remove trammels, and not to impose any. It seems to me that they were freer in their intellectual and moral movements than any human beings in their time. This was particularly the case with St. Paul, who probably had a more complete development of Free Will than any man who ever lived. I of course do not compare human beings with One in whom the Divine and human natures were united. My idea of Free Will is very different from that put forth by the author of the 'Reign of Law,' who says, 'the will of the lower animals is as free as ours.' Correct, adequate, sufficiently extended knowledge is necessary for the exercise of free will. Ignorance is bondage; error enslaves the mind, and acts on the motives with fatal tyranny. The Saviour said: 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'\* Before his conversion Saul of Tarsus was essentially a slave. His false notions gave an unhappy direction to all his ardent, sincere emotions, and led him hopelessly astray. I suppose no human being ever experienced a more rapid and remarkable change than he did, in the whole current of the feelings, in the bent of the will, in the plans, aims, and purposes of life. He

\* John viii. 32.

had been impelled, by fierce and burning zeal, to extirpate what he deemed mischievous error. Suddenly, he perceived that he was himself in a maze of deeply-rooted prejudices, and that all his conceptions in regard to God and His ways had been entirely wrong. How great was the contrast between the pitiful, narrow-minded notions he had entertained of the Messiah and the enlarged views of the vast, boundless, and beneficent sway of the great Mediator and Ruler which were unfolded to him! Great indeed must have been the effect produced on a nature like that of St. Paul, by deliverance from contracted, distorted ideas, and the luminous perception of noble, elevating truths. His minute study of the Sacred Scriptures, the real meaning of which had now become clear to him; his familiarity with Jewish prejudices and modes of thought, so lately his own; his acquaintance with Gentile customs and habits of life; his sympathetic faculties, enabling him to comprehend the feelings of others—formed a rare union of qualifications for the important office to which he was called. A wondrous variety of influences operated on his mind and heart during his career, in developing, expanding, elevating, purifying, softening, and sanctifying his whole character. We have some interesting and pathetic allusions to them in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians.\* His own superior capacities,—the opportunities he had of studying almost every phase of thought

\* 2 Cor. i. 8-10; vi. 4-10; vii. 5, 6; xi. 23-27; xii. 7-10.

and emotion experienced by humanity in his day, and the enlarged and comprehensive revelations made to him, combined to render him the most enlightened man that ever lived.

I suppose no one was ever able to weigh and estimate the comparative value of earthly things, or the real character of the relations of men to each other and to God, so accurately as St. Paul. No man ever perceived and appreciated so fully the transcendent glory and excellency of the Plan of Salvation, and its adaptation to the wants and well-being of the human race. The mingled grandeur, humility, tenderness, and majesty of the Messiah, presenting an image so different from his former conceptions, captivated and absorbed the warm and enthusiastic devotion of his nature. The ignominious cross, which had been an offence and stumbling-block, became his glory; and the unparalleled love of Christ constrained him to yield his life, and all his powers, as an ardent champion in the noblest of causes, but employing weapons of a totally different order from those he had once wielded. He realised, perhaps more than any man, the development of true mental and moral freedom. He saw and felt enslaving, misguiding influences loosen their hold on his mind and heart. He perceived the difference between vital, unalterable principles and matters of expediency; and, comprehending the feelings and prejudices of Jews and Gentiles, strove to adapt his preaching to their circumstances and their mental associations.



He became 'all things to all men,'\* with intelligent discrimination and sympathetic pliability, practising much self-denial and renunciation of his personal tastes and inclinations, that he might promote their spiritual welfare and the spread of the Gospel; yet carefully avoiding injurious compliances, and the very 'appearance of evil.'† All his physical strength, intellectual endowments, and inventive faculties were employed as strenuously as if he believed he could stem the fearful torrent of mental perversity and moral turpitude which he saw everywhere around him. Yet no man was ever more convinced that he could do nothing whatever to remove an atom from the mighty mass of superstition, bigotry, sensuality, corruption, sophistry, cruelty, and darkness,—or to introduce a single ray of sacred light, purity, and hallowed benevolence into a human soul. The combination of active effort and earnest prayer, of entire trust in God and unwearied personal exertion, was, I suppose, never exemplified so fully by any other man.

It is interesting and instructive, though rather sad, to read the comments made on the Saviour and the Apostles by a man of talent and scholastic acquirements, but whose mind, I think, possesses only a vague and indefinite sense of the religious faculty. He acknowledges Christianity to be an important influence for the promotion of human welfare, and regards its great Founder as an en-

\* 1 Cor. ix. 19-22.

† 1 Thess. v. 22.

lightened and bold Reformer ; but endeavours to explain His life and conduct, as being swayed by conflicting human impulses, weaknesses, and heroic sentiments ; free, indeed, from meanness and selfishness, yet not disdaining some connivance in deceptions practised with a view to the furtherance of great public objects. It is clear, I think, that M. Renan assumes explicitly, that no Divine revelation has ever been made, and that a belief in miracles is unworthy of a man of intelligence. His opinions on such points appear to me substantially the same as those of the English Rationalistic School, although, I think, he unveils his real attitude towards Christianity more openly than the latter. At the same time, his attacks on its essential features are softened by bland and gentle turns of language, and his sneers are insinuated with a singular amount of polish and courtesy. He expresses indulgent, though rather contemptuous, pity for the well-meaning credulity of mankind, which he evidently imagines himself to contemplate from serene heights of superior discernment. His works on these topics are valuable and useful, because they induce numbers of his own countrymen to read the Bible, with which they have been, unhappily, almost unacquainted. They are also useful, in a general point of view, as being the testimony of a man of intelligence and research, who does not believe in Revelation, to the reality of certain important events, which he regards as facts and not as myths, and also to the authenticity of the Apostolic writings. The admissions he

makes, in regard to the conduct of the Apostles, and the circumstances in which they were placed, render his own deductions, glosses, and interpretations completely untenable, and assist in vindicating the Divine origin of Christianity, and in establishing the great fact of the Saviour's resurrection. Scarcely any person of good sense, who admits that the Gospel narratives give a fair account of the Apostles and their several distinctive characteristics, can accept the ideas he puts forth in explanation of the belief which prevailed among the disciples in the resurrection of Christ. Even if a loving woman, under a state of nervous excitement, had fancied that she saw Christ risen, it is hard to conceive that such a declaration could have produced undoubting conviction in the Apostles. Still less is it credible that they could have imagined that they saw Him and spoke with Him when they were assembled together. The pleasant and bland phrases of M. Renan, in support of this theory, can have little influence on the common sense of mankind. He who attributes such a predominance of the imaginative faculty to plain, matter-of-fact men, may, I think, be fairly charged with endeavouring to base a serious argument upon a foundation constructed by the fancy, without any assistance from the judgment. He says: 'Un homme pénétrant aurait pu annoncer dès le samedi, que Jésus revivrait. La petite société chrétienne ce jour-là opéra le véritable miracle; elle résuscita Jésus en son cœur par l'amour intense qu'elle lui porta. Elle décida que

Jésus ne mourrait pas. L'amour chez ces âmes passionnées fut vraiment plus fort que la mort. . . . L'idée seule qu'il pût souffrir avait autrefois révolté ses disciples. Ceux-ci n'eurent donc pas de choix entre le désespoir ou une affirmation héroïque.\* The affirmation which he is pleased to call 'héroïque' must, from his point of view, be designated either as a deliberate imposture, or the attestation of men bewildered and confused by over-excitement. The absence of motive renders the first explanation untenable; and the manly, intelligent energy which characterised their proceedings affords no countenance for the second. Besides, such an affirmation would not even have aided them in retaining the hopes and expectations they had formed of the Messiah before His death. It was consistent with an entirely different order of ideas, embracing the death of the Saviour for the sins of mankind, and His spiritual reign over the universe. A scheme of doctrines so comprehensive and profound was radically opposed to the spirit of the age, and could not possibly have originated with simple-minded, untutored Galileans, and was as much at variance with their own prejudices as with those of the whole nation. If they had not felt the strongest convictions, from irresistible evidence, that Christ had risen, they could not have braved the contumely, scorn, and indignation of their own people, with the steady, calm, unhesitating boldness they displayed; and

\* 'Les Apôtres.' I have read no works of Renan except 'La Vie de Jésus' and 'Les Apôtres.'

could not have derived support to endure bitter persecution, and the prospect of a cruel death, from any imaginable inducements, either individually or collectively.

We have further strong and invincible testimony to the reality of the Resurrection, in the marvellous incidents connected with the career of the Apostle Paul, which M. Renan substantially admits, as well as the genuineness and authenticity of his Epistles. He manifests no doubt that he was a fierce persecutor of the Christians; but accounts for the total change in his views, as well as the purposes and aims of his life, first, by ascribing to him a preliminary stage of remorse, for which he adduces no proof, and then by having recourse once more to his theory of nervous derangement and mental hallucination. His tediously persistent reiteration of such a theory hardly does credit to the lively versatility of the French imagination. He affects to consider it possible that the most complete change in the life, character, and conduct of a man like St. Paul might have been effected by ‘commotions cérébrales,’ ‘délire fiévreux,’ ‘la plus vive excitation,’ and ‘un long éblouissement,’ not merely as producing a temporary influence, but profound conviction—deliberate, unswerving resolution—and the permanent renunciation of all that had previously been most cherished and valued.\* A mind capable

\* Phil. iii. 7, 8: ‘What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. . . . I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.’

of believing that, ought not to find any difficulty in giving credence to miracles. If ever a man possessed undoubting assurance in regard to the truth of an event, it was the Apostle Paul concerning the resurrection of Christ. Anyone who reads his Epistles can have no uncertainty on that point. He refers in detail to the irresistible evidences he had acquired, and states, with great clearness, that a man could not be a Christian, and could not endure the overwhelming sorrows, trials, and persecutions to which the disciples of Christ were subjected, unless supported by such a conviction. He does not hesitate to say, that if Christ had not risen, Christianity was a delusion. (See 1 Cor. vi. 14; xv. 3-8, 14-19, 32; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15; xiii. 4; Gal. i. 1, 11-14; Ephes. i. 20-22; Phil. iii. 7-11; Col. ii. 10-12; iii. 1; 1 Thess. i. 9, 10; iv. 14; 2 Tim. i. 9, 10; ii. 8; Heb. vi. 1, 2; xiii. 20, 21.) I would here remark that the Apostles were fully conscious that it was of the highest importance to establish the truth of the Resurrection. We are informed in the first chapter of the Acts that, after the ascension of the Saviour, and before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, a successor was appointed to Judas Iscariot. St. Peter upon that occasion said, 'Wherefore, of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a *witness with us of his resurrec-*

tion.\* St. Peter in his Epistles says: 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables, . . . but were eye-witnesses of his majesty.'† He also said: 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;'‡ indicating that without a belief in the resurrection of Christ such a hope could not exist. St. Paul had ample time for reflection before he irrevocably committed himself to the Christian cause. Immediately after his conversion he preached boldly in Damascus,§ and M. Renan might allege that he was then prompted by excited feelings, and not by steady resolution founded on deliberate convictions. But he was soon driven from thence, and retired into Arabia for about three years. (See Gal. i. 17, 18.) During that period the change in his sentiments was so little known to the Christian churches, that when he went to Jerusalem, after the expiration of three years, the disciples were afraid of him, and 'believed not that he was a disciple.' His active and continuous labours did not commence until after he had been to Jerusalem, where he obtained the evidences in regard to the Resurrection to which he refers in 1 Cor. xv. 3-8.

I feel no hesitation in expressing the conviction that no event of ancient history is established upon testimony so full, clear, and incontestable as the resurrection of Christ. I do not see how we

\* Acts i. 21, 22.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 3.

† 2 Pet. i. 16.

§ Acts ix. 20.

can explain the mental and moral attitude of the Apostles, who had been the companions of Jesus, or the line of conduct they pursued under the circumstances in which they were placed, except on the assumption that they undoubtedly believed in the resurrection of Christ; and I cannot imagine the possibility of their having such a belief without possessing evidences of an irresistible nature. Nor can I suppose it possible that such a man as the Apostle Paul could have embraced Christianity with dogmas so entirely opposed to his prejudices of education, his strong national hopes and convictions, and all the family and social influences which had been operating upon him since his childhood, unless he was clearly and fully convinced that the resurrection of Christ was a real fact. An English writer of the last century (Lord Lyttelton) observes with much justice: 'The conversion and apostleship of St. Paul alone, duly considered, is of itself a demonstration sufficient to prove Christianity to be a Divine revelation.' That eminent Apostle enquired, in his address before Agrippa: 'Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead? '\* The same question may be asked now with still greater force, because in our days the most venerated and deeply-rooted prejudices are being modified by the powerful action of incontrovertible facts. We reckon among familiar, almost commonplace realities, many marvellous processes

\* Acts xxvi. 8.



and results which would have been deemed incredible by the most enlightened minds in the last century. We have also constantly before us the beautiful analogies and affinities of Nature, which have, throughout all time, been suggesting and foreshadowing the consolatory doctrine of the Resurrection. The rebuke of St. Paul to the shallow objector may be applied with increased emphasis, 'Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die.'\* Why should we behold, year after year, the wonderful transformations succeeding decay and death in vegetable and animal natures, and yet listen with supercilious incredulity to the announcement: 'The dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.'† I do not see how any man of intelligence and candour can deny the resurrection of Christ, if he carefully examines the evidence in regard to the lives of the Apostles and the conduct of the first Christians. It also appears impossible for a human intellect to grasp the force of the testimony in proof of that great event, and yet to reject the Divine authority of the Sacred Volume. If we believe that Christ died and rose again, we must also believe the declarations made in regard to the design of His death, and the purport of the types and sacrifices which foreshadowed it. There is a consistency and harmony in the whole which forbid their disunion.

It seems to me that the evidences for the

\* 1 Cor. xv. 36.

† 1 Cor. xv. 52.

Divine origin of Christianity are of a nature to satisfy every order of human intellect, from the highest to the lowest. Mozley, in his 'Lectures on Miracles,' says: 'In no age, from the Apostolic downwards, did the evidence of the Gospel profess to be adapted to convince the mass; it addressed itself to the few, and the hereditary belief of the mass followed.' It is doubtless true that, in religious as well as all other opinions, a few energetic minds guide the multitude. But the Saviour and the Apostles required the masses to 'search the Scriptures,'\* and to 'prove all things;†' and I believe the masses may be convinced, by personal examination, instead of relying implicitly on the few. Multitudes, indeed, have had, and still have, a simple, confiding faith, which, under the stirring tendencies of our age, will become more and more rare. They receive what is taught with docility, and with scarcely any questionings of the intellect as to the grounds of belief. Yet even such, if receiving the truths of Christianity into an honest and sincere heart, acquire evidences of another order, but which, perhaps, are still stronger and more ineradicable than clear, intellectual discernment, if acting alone. They find the declarations, precepts, and promises of the Bible exactly suited to their wants, both in their relations to men and to God—both in respect to the present life and that which is to come. They possess the portable or experimental evidences of the influence

\* John v. 39.

† 1 Thess. v. 21.

of the Bible on their affections, their tempers, and their lives. They derive from thence strong motives to counteract the force of temptation to evil; hallowed consolations in the hour of sorrow, and perceive a glorious radiance which exhibits bright hopes of a life beyond the grave. The adverse critic, however plausible and ingenious, can make no impression on persons who have possessed those experimental evidences for years. He might as well attempt to shake their faith in the nutritive properties of bread. The experimental evidences to which I am adverting may be partially discerned by outward observation, as well as by the inward consciousness of those who experience such influences. They ought to arrest the attention of every intelligent mind, sincerely desirous of investigating all the features relating to these important topics. They are, indeed, partly of an intimate and occult nature; but, when real, some external results become visible in the life and conduct. A Christian, whether learned or unlearned, sometimes, while reading the Bible, feels his soul elevated and purified, filled with love to God and with kindness to his fellow-men. Anyone who experiences such influences, and their practical effects on his character, 'hath the witness in himself,'\* whatever may be his intellectual capacities and acquirements. His mind can be no more affected by hostile criticisms on the Bible, than by an elaborate effort to discredit the beneficial qualities of pure water and fresh air.

\* 1 John v. 10.

In our days we must expect to see all claims to authority scrutinised; and I rejoice that such a tendency exists. It is well that the human intellect should be exercised, in regard to the most important topics, and not remain in a state of indolent inertia or servile docility. Hereditary and unintelligent faith is of no value in itself, and only becomes real when substantiated and firmly implanted by the experimental evidences to which I have referred; and which, indeed, instil light into the understanding. I am aware that clear intellectual discernment is not always accompanied by the genuine faith 'which worketh by love,'\* and powerfully influences the affections and the life. Yet the intellect is undoubtedly the proper channel for the reception of truth; and religious emotions, when not based on enlightened convictions, are of an erratic and uncertain character, and apt to degenerate into fanaticism. I believe the principle of authority has been greatly weakened in many intelligent minds, by the persistent effort to maintain exaggerated and unwarranted ideas, received by tradition, in regard to the important doctrine of Inspiration. It is absolutely necessary to review the opinions on that point with intelligent, serious, and candid appreciation. We must not view the subject in a stilted, artificial, mystic way, but as intimately and vitally connected with the Scheme of Redemption, and designed to promote life, energy, and real movement in minds and hearts; not to have an ossifying

\* Gal. v. 6.

effect on the intellect, and to fix it in an immovable groove. We are, I suppose, better qualified to take enlarged and intelligent views on such points than any preceding age. We are able to do justice to the noble labours and sacrifices of our forefathers on behalf of great principles. But a review of their lives also teaches us, that they obtained advantages for themselves and for us, by modifications in the sentiments and practices of their predecessors, and that there can be no intellectual progress without such changes. We have abandoned, or greatly altered, many traditional opinions in regard to human relations; and are not warranted in admitting the claim of finality for human notions on religious subjects, any more than on political or social affairs. An observation of Froude, in the 'History of England,' may be applied to the necessity of progress in an enlightened and comprehensive appreciation of scriptural truth: 'So absolutely has change become the law of our present condition, that it is identified with energy and moral health; to cease to change is to lose place in the great race; and to pass away from off the earth with the same convictions which we found when we entered it, is to have missed the best object for which we now seem to exist.' This is true, I think, not because change is in itself desirable, but because our knowledge is very limited on all subjects, and blended with erroneous ideas; so that, without constant modifications and changes, correction of errors and expansion of knowledge is impossible. The

Volume of Divine Revelation is complete ; but our comprehension of it is imperfect, confused, and restricted, and we can only advance towards a gradual increase of enlightened and harmonious views, by steady, vigorous, and persevering efforts.

There may always be differences of opinion among intelligent Christians as to the extent or limits of inspiration. But sincere and earnest enquirers after truth will not be left in a state of bewilderment injurious to their spiritual interest. Our Saviour said, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.' We may also bear in mind, that the intellectual and moral difficulties of the present life serve not only as important instruments of discipline and trial, but as the means of developing and expanding the highest and noblest capacities and powers of human nature. We are so constituted that earnest application, laborious effort, and the vigorous grappling with difficulties, increase the forces within us, whether they belong to our corporeal or spiritual nature. Enlightened convictions are not to be obtained by listening submissively to the voice of dictatorial assertion, and echoing its utterances with undeviating exactitude ; but by a process of intellectual discernment, which seizes hold of every feature of a proposition, and deposits the whole in the treasury of our living thoughts. The mind may bow mechanically to positive declarations under the supposition that they emanate from adequate authority ; but, unless the truths affirmed are grasped by the understanding,

and suitably affect the moral sensibilities, they do not practically benefit the individual. I think the intelligent and earnest student of the Bible may become convinced, that the doctrines of religion which it contains are stamped with the seal of Divine authority, by comparing Scripture with Scripture, and perceiving the harmony and salutary tendency of the whole, as manifested by the earliest intimations—by the types, sacrifices, and ceremonies—by the gradual increase of clearness in the Psalms and Prophetical declarations—and by the full and complete disclosures in the New Testament. Besides, the experimental evidences in the suitability of those doctrines, for the wants and yearnings of the human heart, and the beneficial effects they produce, add greatly to the conviction felt in respect to their Divine origin. It is only in reference to subordinate topics, not essentially connected with religion, that we have reason to doubt in how far the statements and opinions of the sacred writers are invested with Divine authority. We may, with propriety, test the correctness of such declarations by every means in our power, and any apparent, or even proved, inaccuracy on such points would not weaken my conviction that the writers were messengers from God. It is obligatory on intelligent beings to ‘regard the works of the Lord,’ \* and ‘wisely to consider of his doings.’ † We ought to study His works in Creation and His doings in Providence, as well as in the disclosures

\* Psalm xxviii. 5.

† Psalm lxiv. 9.

of Revelation. We ought, I think, to have recourse to the researches of science, and the records of ordinary history, in order to assist us in obtaining correct views respecting the limits of inspiration, and in rightly interpreting the statements made by the sacred writers, which is often a matter of great difficulty. The labours of qualified men in those departments have been valuable, though as yet very restricted, when compared with the magnitude of the subject; and much remains to be done, both in the wide department of natural science, and in an intelligent estimate of the records of history, which certainly cannot rank among positive sciences, as it is the opinion of qualified persons that a large portion of history has to be rewritten, if truth be the object of research. The interesting monuments of Egyptian and Assyrian antiquity will probably yield an addition of much valuable information, when the inscriptions they contain are more completely disclosed, and more fully understood; and many other ancient remains, now hidden from view in the lands of Palestine, will divulge important evidence when they become accessible. The Books of Nature and Providence have come to us from the same Author as the Book of Revelation, and we shall best be able to interpret each aright by studying the whole. The following remarks in the 'Reign of Law' appear to me quite just: 'No man who thoroughly accepts a principle in the philosophy of Nature which he feels to be inconsistent with a doctrine of religion, can help having



his belief in that doctrine shaken and undermined. . . . We are right in thinking, that if they are both indeed true, they can be reconciled; and if they are really and fundamentally opposed, they cannot both be true. . . . The error may lie in our theology, or it may be in what we are pleased to call our science. It may be that some dogma, derived by tradition from our fathers, is having its hollowness betrayed by that light which sometimes shines upon the ways of God, out of a better knowledge of His works. It may be that some proud and rash generalisation of the schools is having its falsehood proved by the violence it does to the deepest instincts of our spiritual nature.' So, in like manner, if we find that our dogmatical views do not agree with our ethical sentiments, we may feel certain that we are in error, on one side or the other.

In one of Macaulay's Essays,\* to which I referred at the end of the first chapter, he says that philosophers, in assailing the Evangelical faith, borrowed their most efficient weapons from the Evangelical morality. He adds: 'The ethical and dogmatical parts of the Gospel were unhappily turned against each other.' I submit that it would be more correct to say, that the ethical parts of the Gospel were turned against the interpretations given by theologians of the dogmatical parts; and I further submit that, if those interpretations cannot bear this test, we

\* Ranke's 'History of the Popes,' October 1840.

have good grounds for supposing that they are not correct. It is true, as Mr. Mansel says, in 'Limits of Religious Thought,'\* that 'the moral faculty, though furnishing undoubtedly some of the most important elements for the solution of the religious problem, is no more entitled than any other single principle of the human mind to be accepted as a sole and sufficient criterion.' But there is also truth in a remark of Newman on the Soul (quoted by Mansel), that a human mind, enlightened and impressed by the Evangelical morality, is in some degree qualified to judge of dogmas, and to say, 'This doctrine attributes to God that which we should call harsh, cruel, or unjust in man; it is, therefore, intrinsically inadmissible. . . . In fact all Christian apostles and missionaries, like the Hebrew prophets, have always refuted Paganism by direct attacks on its immoral and unspiritual doctrines, and have appealed to the consciences of heathens as competent to decide in the controversy. Such a book as 'Limits of Religious Thought' owes its origin, I think, in a great degree, to the uneasiness produced by the discrepancies between the Evangelical morality and the theological interpretations of the dogmas of the Gospel. It seems to be one of its chief objects to soothe the minds of Christians under such circumstances, by reminding them of the insufficiency of human reason, and the imperfect opera-

\* Preface to fourth edition.

tion of the moral sense. I think the advocates of Paganism might employ similar arguments, as I doubt if they attribute to their deities a course of conduct more essentially cruel than Christian divines ascribe to the Supreme Ruler of the universe. It does not appear to have occurred to the author of 'Limits of Religious Thought,' that the dogmatical interpretations of theologians may be seriously wrong. No intelligent Christian can doubt the insufficiency of human reason, and the imperfection of our moral faculties. But it is to be recollected that man, even in his natural condition, and unenlightened by the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, is able to appreciate the beauty of the Evangelical morality. Why, then, should not man, when under the influence of regeneration, be capable of perceiving harmony and consistency between the ethical and dogmatical parts of the Gospel? Man was created in the image of God, which we understand to refer to his intellectual and moral characteristics. Under the illuminating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, that likeness, which has been greatly obliterated and distorted by moral evil, is again stamped on the spirit with progressive vividness;\* and the individual becomes qualified, in a certain sense, to judge what is in harmony with the moral attributes of God, and what is not, as his own moral qualities are in a subordinate degree the same in kind. If, therefore, certain doctrines

\* 2 Cor. iii. 18.

appear inconsistent with justice, goodness, and wisdom, we are warranted in doubting their truth. The intolerable pressure of those doubts becomes unavoidable, if the repugnance felt against those doctrines increases in intensity, in proportion as ferocious opinions and practices give way to more benevolent and kindly sentiments. When such doubts become clamorous and will not be silenced, they ought not to be met by a soothing process, or by unintelligible disquisitions about the Finite and Infinite, but by a searching and vigorous investigation of the subject; and the absurd notion of finality in human interpretations of Scripture ought to be discarded. If human reason is insufficient in our day, why should we suppose that the reasoning faculties of uninspired men, living in the midst of cruelty and corruption, were better qualified to understand the gracious intentions of that great Being whose pre-eminent characteristic is love? Why should we accept their hideous interpretations of the Gospel Plan of Salvation, which at its promulgation was hailed as 'good tidings of great joy,' and which they have transformed into a message of woe?

We must do battle, all our lives, with many uncertainties and difficulties; it is part of the salutary discipline to which we are subjected. We have to search for knowledge and understanding as for hid treasures.\* There are sincere differences of opinion upon many important points.

\* Prov. ii. 3, 4.

There are controversies and disputes about the canon of Scripture. The Roman Catholics include more books of the Old Testament than the Protestants. The Protestants differ among themselves in the appreciation of the Apocryphal books. The early English Reformers included them in the Bible, and conceded to them a use 'for example of life and instruction of manners,' but not for establishment of doctrine. We exclude them entirely from the authorised version, although portions of them are still appointed to be read as part of the services in the Established Church of England. They are included in the Lutheran Bibles, and it is stated that they 'are not placed on an equal footing with Holy Scripture, and yet are profitable and good for reading.' We have no clear evidence (I believe) in regard to the first collection of the sacred books together, either of the Old or New Testament. It is certain that, before the first collection of the New Testament writings was made, there were differences of reading in the copies extant; and, as all the original apostolic writings had perished, a reference to them was impossible. But the records of the controversies in the second century showed in what passages the differences existed, and prevented any subsequent discrepancies; furnishing us with strong evidences that we possess, with possibly some slight variations, the genuine declarations of the Apostles. All the books of the Old Testament, contained in the English Protestant version of the Bible, seem to have been recognised

as of Divine authority, in every ancient canon, except the book of Esther, which was omitted by a section of the Palestine Jews. All the Churches of the West have agreed in regard to the books of the New Testament, which is a very assuring circumstance, particularly when we reflect that the Catholics hold doctrines which are opposed by the Protestants. Some of these doctrines the Catholics profess to derive from traditions, purporting to embody supplementary declarations of the Apostles ; but they do not pretend to include such supposed traditions in the sacred canon. It appears undoubted that the canons, both of the Old and New Testament, were definitely formed and recognised in times of sore persecution and trial ; which is calculated to inspire much confidence, as at such periods false professors of religion withdraw, and their bewildering influence is not exercised. There are disputes in regard to the authorship of some of the sacred books ; but, to my mind, that circumstance does not affect their validity. There are difficulties in apprehending the meaning of, and rightly translating, numerous passages. This is partly owing to our imperfect acquaintance with the circumstances and customs of the times in which the writers lived, and which served as a basis of illustration and allusion. We may also, in a measure, attribute it to the fact, that Christianity unfolded many ideas and sentiments which were new to humanity, and the languages in use were not adequate to give clear expression to those new ideas and

thoughts. The writers had indeed, in almost all cases, to instil heavenly truths, by means of paraphrases and analogies, rather than by a more direct exposition. It is impossible to convey distinct and forcible impressions respecting the nature and attributes of God, in any other way than by imperfect analogies drawn from human characteristics ; and we have abundant proofs that the efforts of philosophers to do so by abstract reasonings and definitions have proved complete failures. So, also, the ordinary resources of phraseology are incompetent to delineate clearly the rise, progress, and movements of spiritual life in the spirit. Yet, in spite of unavoidable obscurities, by reason of the imperfect medium of language, and difficulties of accurate translation, those who feel the action of spiritual life in their own spirits are able to realise the meaning of the apostolic declarations, in a progressive degree, as they advance in religious experience ; and sometimes the unlettered man, who is only just able to read the Bible, acquires clearer views than one whose intellectual culture is greatly superior. Sincere and earnest-minded Christians obtain, through their own consciousness and experience, an amount of conviction in regard to the Divine authority and truthfulness of the Scriptures, which can never be possessed by those who are destitute of genuine religious emotions. ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him : neither can he know them, because they are spiritually

discerned.\* His situation is similar to that of a man born blind, who is unable to comprehend what is said about the act of vision, as there is nothing in his consciousness and sensations to afford a suitable basis for illustration.

The prominent and leading subject of the Bible is salvation through Christ; and all the writers, both of the Old and New Testament, contribute in some way to its gradual development. The first intimations were vague and indistinct; then increasingly clearer manifestations were given; and at length the declarations became definite and explicit, exhibiting a harmony of the whole in pointing to one great object. It behoves every man who believes that the Divine and human natures were united in the Saviour, to contemplate the unparalleled dignity and majesty of His person and character, with a modest and humble recollection that the highest human faculties have a very limited range of power and capacity. We cannot understand our own complex nature; a bird, a flower, a drop of water present inscrutable mysteries to us. We are frequently reminded of our liability to misconceive the ideas and feelings even of those with whom we are most familiar; and we justly consider it absurd, that an inferior man should pretend to gauge and measure the mental and moral features of one superior to himself in intellect, and possessing far more extended knowledge. Yet well-meaning men of in-

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14.



telligence have not hesitated to write as if they deemed themselves competent to estimate the thoughts and emotions of the Saviour. The example of Milton, in this respect, has always appeared to me a serious blemish in his reputation ; and his rash attempt to soar into regions far beyond the reach of the human conceptions has, I think, exercised an injurious influence on the thoughts of Christendom. He seems to have regarded the Messiah as the first and most elevated of created beings, and not as 'very God,' one with the Father. But even this Arian view ought to have suggested far more restraint than he imposed on the vagaries of his imagination. Yet it is less painful to read the bold and free remarks of those who profess to consider our Lord as a created being, whether above humanity or not, than to witness the incongruous demeanour of other writers, who seem to imply, if not distinctly to avow, a belief in the Divinity of Christ, and then proceed to adopt a style of expression which cannot be easily reconciled with such a belief.

An intelligent and serious mind is often perplexed and bewildered, while endeavouring to appreciate the varied motives and impulses which operate on a fellow-man. It is still more baffled, perhaps, when it ponders on the movements of instinct, mingled with something like reason and emotion, in the lower animals. An earnest-minded, thoughtful man, who receives the Bible as a revelation from God, must surely experience a sense of reverential awe, softened by admiring love, when

he reflects on that wonderful being, of whom it is said : ‘The Word was with God—the Word was God—all things were made by Him. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ;’ \* ‘took upon Him the form of a servant.’† He was a true man : ‘touched with the feeling of our infirmities—in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.’‡ We believe He had a human body and a human spirit ; and presume that spirit must have been restrained and affected, in its intellectual and moral movements, by the physical organisation, even as our own consciousness reveals in regard to ourselves. We suppose that organisation was of the most perfect type in all respects ; more so than any human beings ever possessed, except, perhaps, Adam and Eve, while in a state of innocence. But the Divine nature which pervaded the whole of the Saviour’s being, and was intimately, though incomprehensibly, united to the human, must have produced a modification in His capacities and feelings, of which we can have no conception whatever. It is impossible for us to estimate the range of His mental vision and knowledge. He evidently retained, in His mysteriously blended nature, a recollection of that which preceded His advent on earth ; for, in the sublime prayer,§ offered in the hearing of the disciples, He speaks of the glory He had with the Father before the world was. We cannot tell in what way, and to what extent, His Divine omniscience affected

\* John i.    † Phil. ii. 7.    ‡ Heb. iv. 15.    § John xvii.

His human faculties. The language of the Saviour Himself, and that which is stated concerning Him by the Apostles, indicate that there was a limit; and yet that His knowledge was so wide and comprehensive as to check and rebuke the utmost efforts of our imagination. He saw the relations of God to the universe in a way of which we have no idea. He beheld the causes, ramifications, and effects of moral evil, not only with intellectual clearness of vision, but because He ‘suffered being tempted,’\* and was made ‘perfect through sufferings;’† being ‘tempted like as we are,’‡ but remaining ‘holy, harmless, undefiled.’§ He honoured and elevated our nature by showing the compatibility therein of weakness and grandeur, of affinities to the lower orders of creation, and yet a clear and forcible manifestation of the likeness to God. He left us ‘an example that we should follow His steps;’|| a model and pattern which has greatly changed human notions of morality and virtue, so much so as to be equal to the discovery ‘of a new continent in the moral globe.’¶ He exhibited the character of God to the human race, and to other intelligent beings, under an aspect so astonishing and impressive, as to appear beyond the bounds of credibility. When we endeavour to realise the wonderful fact, that ‘the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the

\* Heb. ii. 18.

† Heb. ii. 10.

‡ Heb. iv. 15.

§ Heb. vii. 26.

|| 1 Pet. ii. 21.

¶ ‘Ecce Homo.’

Father, full of grace and truth,\* that ‘He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,’† we derive ideas of earnest, strong compassion and tenderness, manifested by self-abnegation and self-sacrifice, which the researches of philosophy, and the boldest conceptions of genius, could never have discerned or imagined. When we read that ‘God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son,’‡ and listen to the affecting and spirit-stirring appeal of the Apostle—‘Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God,’§—thoughts and emotions arise within us which enable us, with some impressiveness, though very inadequately, to enter into the mysterious depth of the touching declaration, ‘God is love.’ We may imagine, and I think are warranted in doing so, by the intimations of the Bible, that the mighty energy of the love which has produced such voluntary humiliation and self-sacrifice, will gradually transform all the coldness and malignity that exist in the universe into responsive warmth.

It seems to me that many features connected with the proofs of love manifested by the Creator towards His sinful, erring creatures in the wonderful scheme of redemption, have been overlooked by theologians, owing to their contracted and distorted mode of viewing that great subject. The phraseology employed in the Sacred Volume

\* John i.

† Phil. ii. 8.

‡ John iii. 16.

§ 2 Cor. v. 20.

indicates that the ever-blessed God has submitted to self-imposed sacrifices, pains, sorrows—irksome, repugnant occupations—and to the most patient endurance of loathsome and repulsive spectacles, for the good of His creatures. Some of the theologians speak of the Divine Nature as if it were incapable of pain and sorrow, but capable of never-ending anger, forgetting that anger is sorrow. Others express themselves as if they supposed that the statements in the Bible respecting the love, mercy, and wrath of God simply indicate a course of action appropriate to such feelings, and not the actual existence of emotions. I would submit that it is impossible for us to form distinct conceptions of the Divine Nature. We are informed in the Bible that God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness;’ and we believe that likeness resides in the spirit of man. But, in this life, our ideas as to the nature of our own spirits are very vague and indistinct. All our emotions and thoughts result from a blending of the material and immaterial, as our spirits can make no movement whatever except through a physical medium. We have little, if any, basis for conjectures, in regard to the feelings of a spirit when not united to a corporeal organisation. I believe a sincere, earnest-minded, and intelligent Christian can understand more of the nature of God than the most intellectual man who is destitute of Christian experience. The influences of the Holy Spirit upon the spirit of a Christian enable him to form ideas respecting the

holiness, purity, equity, and tenderness of the Divine Nature, of which other men have no impressive conceptions. Almost all our notions concerning God are communicated by means of analogies drawn from human characteristics. When we are told that 'God is love,' our thoughts are led to the contemplation of the fondest and purest affections which soften and dignify Humanity, in order to realise, in some measure, the meaning of that declaration. The most striking proof of that love, and one which is accessible to every human conception, is the wonderful fact, that He who was with the Father before the world was, and by whom all things were made, took upon Him our nature, suffered and died for us. This marvellous sacrifice proceeded from the love of the Godhead, in its Triune Essence ; for it is said, 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son ;' \* and again, 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.'† There is a solemn reality in the sacrifices made by the Creator, which is indeed beyond our comprehension, but is forcibly indicated by the language of Scripture. Those sacrifices were not confined to the period of the Saviour's sojourn on the earth, but must have been experienced ever since the entrance of moral evil into the universe. That deadly poison is essentially repugnant to the Divine Nature, and is endured by God for wise ends, connected with the

\* John iii. 16.

† 1 John iv. 10.

permanent welfare of His creatures; even as physical poisons, although fatally destructive and noxious, may, if applied with benevolent wisdom, be made to promote salutary purposes. Although repulsive and loathsome to the purity and holiness of God, He unflinchingly witnesses its operations in its multitudinous forms and ramifications. There is constantly present to the view of the great Omniscient a widely extending spectacle, far more revolting and disgusting than an immense lazar-house would be to a delicate and sensitive human organisation, and of which the Divine cognisance takes in the most minute details. Although it is written that 'the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord;'<sup>\*</sup> and the pathetic entreaty was conveyed through the Prophets, 'Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate,'<sup>†</sup> yet the great Creator does not shrink from the most patient endurance and contemplation of thoughts, feelings, words, and actions, which are altogether abhorrent to His nature, and could be extinguished in a moment. It is not merely as a spectator, however, that the Creator, Sovereign, and Judge of the universe has the fearful dramas of evil unceasingly before Him. He descends into the vast lazar-house, and comes in contact with the raging madness and the noisome pestilence, assuming the office of a wise, firm, and benevolent Physician. He has a mighty remedy, efficacious for the most aggravated cases,

<sup>\*</sup> Prov. xv. 26.

<sup>†</sup> Jer. xliv. 4.

and which will cure all ills at length. But it must not be applied hurriedly, or the cure would be incomplete and not durable. The real properties of the deadly poison must be exhibited, so as to be fully understood by all those who are liable to have it infused into their nature, in order that they, as free and intelligent beings, may learn to avoid its most subtle approaches, and become permanently safe and happy. Owing to this necessity, the loving Physician, who does not 'afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,'\* and who hath subjected the creature 'to vanity, in hope,'† is often obliged to allow the poison to inoculate the veins of infancy with only a slight, and sometimes perhaps with no, assuaging interference; and unsuspecting innocence, as well as unwary heedlessness, must often be left a prey to the insidious destroyer. But, when circumstances permit this gracious Being to display, unchecked, the wealth of His tenderness, He condescends to undertake employments which resemble nothing human, except the unwearied, fond, and watchful ministrations of a mother to a sick and suffering child.

The language of Scripture indicates, I think, that when 'the Word was made flesh,' the Divine Nature participated in the griefs and sufferings of the human nature. This is a mysterious subject, far above our comprehension; but there appears to be a solemn and impressive reality in the fact,

\* Lam. iii. 33.

† Rom. viii. 20.



and therein consisted the virtue of the wonderful sacrifice that was made. Man had failed to keep the equitable and just law of God; and God Himself, in human form, obeyed its dictates, with scrupulous adherence, in every particular. Man had incurred the penalties which the righteous administration of the universal Sovereign had imposed on disobedience; and those penalties were borne, with an awful reality of suffering, by the Lawgiver Himself. Man, the transgressor, was filled with enmity against his God, who inspired him with fear and aversion, as he had become totally incompetent to see God 'as He is,' and to understand His real character. The clouds and darkness which appear to enshroud the Creator have been fabricated by moral evil; or rather, there is a film in the mental vision of sinful creatures, which prevents them from discerning the exquisite beauty of the Divine Nature. The Bible indicates, in numerous passages, that God earnestly desires to win the affection and confidence of His intelligent creatures; that it is sweet and pleasant for Him to be loved and appreciated, not by enforced homage, but by a spontaneous effusion of tenderness. Therefore the eminent Apostle, who entered more fully into this great subject than any other, exclaimed under Divine inspiration, with touching pathos: 'Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.' It is impossible to imagine more earnest, tender, and

condescending efforts to restore kindly, loving, and loyal relations between a righteous and benevolent Sovereign and His revolted subjects. He had never required anything from them except that which was due to Himself, as their Creator and most liberal Benefactor, and was best fitted to promote their own welfare. Yet He assumes the attitude of affectionate entreaty, and points to the most unequivocal proofs of self-sacrifice, in order to convince them how great His love is towards them, and to elicit responsive affection.

It is worthy of notice, that the natural instincts of Humanity have attributed to the Deity a susceptibility of pain; which is shown by the fact that almost all heathen nations have imagined their gods to be exposed to suffering of various kinds. The theories of ancient philosophers seem to convey a similar idea, in a different form. Such of them as recognised a Supreme Being represented all objects, whether material or immaterial, as emanating from the Deity, and connected with His nature by ties as close and inseparable as the members of our bodies are with ourselves. Yet systematic theology has endeavoured to crush those natural sentiments by inventing the imaginary axiom, that even sympathetic sorrow would be derogatory to the dignity of the Godhead, and that suffering is inconsistent with happiness. When we recur to analogies of the purest and most elevated kind in human life, we sometimes witness the suffering of a tender, sympathetic mother, when applying remedial measures which

inflict pain upon a loved child, and perceive that she may be essentially happy if she feels certain that the painful remedy will effect a cure. We also sometimes see a human being joyfully undergoing privation and pain to free another from suffering, or to promote the welfare of one who is loved. We ought not to imagine that the happiness of the most exalted of Beings would consist in imperturbable serenity; but rather, in the blending of exquisite sensibilities with clearness of judgment, elevated moral qualities, and strength of will. I venture to deny that our conceptions of the grandeur and glory of the Deity are lowered by the supposition, that the Creator has voluntarily subjected Himself to sacrifices and sufferings for the good of His creatures. On the contrary, I have an earnest conviction that, in proportion as this great and affecting truth, which is so impressively taught in the New Testament, reaches and penetrates the intellects and hearts of the intelligent creation, the coldness and malignity which sin has engendered will be dissipated by the all-conquering energy of that immeasurable love, and will be transformed into responsive warmth. The God of the Bible is not represented as impassive; but as being deeply affected by the action of moral evil upon His intelligent creatures. I have already quoted some passages to that effect, and will add the following: 'And it repented the Lord that He had made man on the earth, and it grieved Him at His heart' (Gen. vi. 6); 'Forty years long was I grieved with this generation' (Psalm xcv.

10); 'Therefore was the wrath of God kindled against his people, insomuch that He abhorred His own inheritance' (Psalm cvi. 40); 'God is angry with the wicked every day' (Psalm vii. 11); 'Hear ye now, O house of David; is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also?' (Isa. vii. 13); 'Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my bowels are troubled for him' (Jer. xxxi. 20). The beautiful passage, to which I have already referred, wherein God entreats men to be reconciled to Him, is conceived in a style of sorrowful expostulation, the tenderness of which cannot be surpassed. The statements concerning the Holy Spirit also convey affecting impressions in regard to the sympathetic sorrows of the Creator, and the exercise of irksome, patient, minute, and diversified labours. That Divine Agent is represented as striving against the folly and depravity of men; as teaching, enlightening, warning, restraining, sanctifying. He assumes the gracious office of Comforter; and, in Rom. viii. 26, it is said: 'The Spirit also maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.' Nothing can more forcibly suggest the tender susceptibilities of the Divine Nature, than the peculiarly touching remonstrance in Ephes. iv. 30: 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God.' I will also add the beautiful passage in Isaiah lxiii. 9: 'In all their afflictions He was afflicted.'

It seems to me that there is a want of consistency

in theological statements on this important subject. The idea that the Divine Nature can suffer appears to be explicitly rejected, and yet to be admitted by strong inference. In the Second Article of the Church of England it is said, respecting the Son of God, that He 'took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin, of her substance; so that two whole and perfect natures—that is to say, the Godhead and manhood—were joined together in one Person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried.' So, in the Athanasian Creed, the following words are used concerning the Saviour, 'Who, although He be God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ. . . . For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ; who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead.' In these passages, in portions of the Litany, and in many of the Collects, the impression is conveyed, as clearly as can be done by the use of language, that the Divine Nature of the Saviour participated in the sufferings of His human nature. In the Wesleyan Catechism it is said: 'Christ being both God and man, and perfectly righteous, there was an infinite value in His death.' In Luther's Articles of Faith and Doctrine it is said, respecting the Saviour, 'God the Son became man, was born of the pure Virgin Mary, and the two natures, Divine and human, inseparably united in one Person, form one Christ, who is truly God and

man, truly born, suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried.' I think I am entitled to say, that such language conveys the idea very clearly, that the Divine Nature of the Son of God participated in the sufferings of His human nature. I find that idea in harmony with the statements of Scripture. It is forcibly expressed in Phil. ii. 6-8 : 'Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.' We find it also clearly expressed in Heb. i. 3 ; ii. 9, 10, 14, and 18 ; v. 7 and 8 ; and I do not think there are any passages of Scripture which even seem to indicate that only the human nature of Christ suffered. I am unable to understand how the Divine Nature can suffer ; but I am equally unable to comprehend how the Divine Nature could be so united to the human nature as to constitute one Person. It is quite as easy for my intellect to grasp the former proposition as the latter ; and not only so, but, when I attempt to realise the idea, that the two natures were united in one Person, it appears indispensable to suppose that the emotions belonging to human nature were experienced by that august Person. Expressions such as the following : 'The Word was made flesh,'—'took upon Him the form of a servant,'—'He Himself hath suffered being tempted,'—'learned obedience by the things which He suf-

ferred,' have no conceivable meaning to my mind if I reject the idea that the Son of God has suffered.

Yet, in spite of all the statements in creeds to which I have referred, seeming to convey the idea that the Divine Nature is capable of suffering, and has suffered, the explicit declarations of systematic theology, as far as I understand them, have, since the fourth century, distinctly rejected that idea. Athanasius, in his grand, imperious style, frightened timid Christians by stern anathemas. He combated, with earnest zeal, against certain errors ; and with the too frequent one-sidedness of fierce disputants forgot that other errors may be equally pernicious. His remarks on the sufferings of Christ are of a bewildering nature, calculated to produce no clear and distinct notions, and to leave the mind in a state of perplexity as to whether, and in what sense, those sufferings were real ; and, if real, who it was that suffered. He says, ' Being God, He had His own body, and, using this as an instrument, He became man for our sakes. . . And, on account of this, the properties of the flesh are said to be His, since He was in it, such as to hunger, to thirst, to suffer, to weary, and the like, of which the flesh is capable. . . . Whence it was that, when the flesh suffered, the Word was not external to it, and therefore the passion is said to be His. . . For, on this account, has the Apostle himself said, Christ then having suffered, not in His Godhead, but *for us in the flesh*, that these affections may be acknowledged as not

proper to the very Word by nature, but proper by nature to the very flesh.' Well might Dr. Pusey, the editor of his works, say: 'His glosses of St. Peter's language seem gratuitous and unjustifiable. By such a mode of interpretation we can get whatever meaning we like out of language.' In connection with the same passage, he speaks of the impassibility of the Word's nature, and of the infirmities ascribed to Him because of the flesh. Athanasius, and subsequent writers, who have adopted the pernicious style of bewilderment and vagueness, which leaves the mind and heart unimpressed by the love of God, as shown in a reality of suffering, do not, as far as I can see, inform us who it was that suffered. It is pitiful to say, the Word did not thirst, nor was weary, as we know that the spirit of a man does not suffer thirst, nor can it be pierced by a sword, or by nails. But, while the spirit is united to a body, it suffers when the body suffers; and if the Divine Nature was so united to the human nature as to form one Person, it suffered when the human nature suffered; that being an indispensable condition of real union, in so far as a human intellect can grasp the subject. It seems that Athanasius was induced to make those strange unimpressive declarations because Arius had affirmed that 'the nature of the Word suffered in the flesh,' and he wished to oppose every opinion of one whom he sincerely considered a dangerous heretic. The zealous Trinitarians of that period condemned, in two councils, the opinion expressed by others, that 'the Divine



Nature in Christ was blended with the human, and suffered with it the pains of crucifixion and death.' For about 1,300 years after that, the question seems to have been seldom touched by any theologians.

Bishop Pearson, in his work on the Creed, 200 years ago, endeavours to show that the human nature of the Saviour suffered, and not the Divine. His argument, so far as I understand it, is not based on Scriptural declarations, but simply on the notion that the Divine Nature cannot suffer. He says: 'The Divine Nature is of infinite and eternal happiness, never to be disturbed by the least degree of infelicity, and therefore subject to no sense of misery. Wherefore, while we profess that the Son of God did suffer for us, we must so far explain our assertion as to deny that the Divine Nature of our Saviour suffered.' There is no force in this argument, unless based on clear declarations of the Bible. We know nothing of the Divine Nature by the light of reason, but only by revelation. If the Divine Nature did not suffer, and yet some one did suffer, it must have been a created being. He says further: 'The Divine Nature of the Son is common to the Father and the Spirit; if that had been the subject of His passion, then must the Father and the Spirit have suffered.' Such points are beyond our capacity to understand, as indeed is the whole mystery of the Incarnation. He might as well have said that, if the Word was made flesh, the Father and the Spirit must also have been made flesh, being

inseparably united to the Word, or the Son. Besides, the language of the Bible indicates to my mind that the Father and the Spirit have undergone and do undergo voluntary sufferings. The declaration, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,' clearly implies a sacrifice, and a sacrifice involves the idea of suffering. The passages, 'The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered,' and 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,' impress the mind with the idea of something like suffering. I suppose the views put forth by Bishop Pearson on this subject are professedly held by orthodox theologians in general, as I have met with no indications to the contrary. In that case, and if those views are wrong, the amount of injury inflicted has been great, as ministers of religion, after going through a course of systematic theology, have been prevented from exhibiting the most forcible and unequivocal proofs of Divine love to their hearers. There is a series of arguments, by a writer in the '*Bibliotheca Sacra*,' in a similar strain, and I have vainly searched in the same and subsequent volumes for expressions of dissent from those views. This confirms my impression that they are considered orthodox by modern theologians. The reasonings of the writer referred to are, as far as I see, all founded on human notions, and not on Scriptural declarations; as, indeed, he endeavours to explain away the passages in the Sacred Volume which appear opposed to his ideas. The last argument is that, if the Divine Nature in

Christ suffered, the entire Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit, must have suffered. I repeat that this is a point beyond our faculties of comprehension. But, even if we suppose that the suffering extended to the entire Godhead—what then? Is it not clear that voluntary suffering for the welfare of the universe is a noble suffering — not a bitter suffering, inconsistent with Divine calmness and happiness? Is it not, on the contrary, in so far as our minds can be elevated to the sublime thought, a suffering which may infuse active joy into the Divine serenity of happiness? That is the idea conveyed to my mind by the language of Scripture, ‘Who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame’ (Hebrews xii. 2). This is spoken of One ‘who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross’ (Phil. ii. 6–8). Such language as this conveys to my mind, in the most impressive manner, the idea that the principle of self-sacrifice, for noble ends, is not only inculcated in the Bible, but illustrated by the example of the Creator. I insist earnestly on this point, because I feel convinced that, when this affecting truth penetrates into the intellects and hearts of intelligent creatures, its moral influence, in counteracting malignity and selfishness, will be very potent. It is, indeed, one of the most powerful means of regenerating, purifying, and elevating

the universe, both in the direct action of the Creator's self-sacrifices and labours, and in the softening effect produced on the mind and affections, by an impressive comprehension of His wonderful love, in undergoing those labours and sufferings for the good of His creatures.

I have been struck on observing that, in the Boyle Lectures for 1868, by the Rev. Stanley Leathes, there is apparently some appreciation of this great truth, although the lecturer stops short at the threshold, and does not venture to declare it fully, being perhaps restrained, consciously or unconsciously, by the fear of wandering beyond the bounds of orthodoxy. He speaks of the Messianic anticipation which may be traced in the Old Testament writers. He says: 'The knowledge of the Messiah. . . . was the knowledge of a mysterious Person existing in the essence of the Divine Being. . . . In short, it was the Christ-character of God, which it was the blessed privilege of these men to have been permitted to perceive. . . . For example, if it was necessary, as our Lord declares, that the Messiah should suffer, if suffering was an essential part of His character, then they could not know Him without knowing also the suffering aspect of His nature. They would necessarily see in Him a suffering being. Their spiritual knowledge of God revealed to them, so to say, His capacity for suffering. Not that God is a Being who can suffer, strictly speaking, nor therefore sympathise; but it was given to these men to see that there was that in Him

which, under the requisite circumstances, would be willing to endure the extremest sufferings for man, as there was also that which could be moved to the deepest sympathy with him.' This is a remarkable statement, and, to my mind, indicates a process of thought in the right direction, although much impeded by the trammels which systematic theology has imposed. The lecturer goes so far as to discern a capacity in God for suffering, and a willingness to endure the extremest sufferings for man, and to be moved to the deepest sympathy with him, 'under the requisite circumstances.' Can we imagine circumstances more fitted to awaken the tender, compassionate, and sympathetic feelings of the Creator than those in which the intelligent creation is actually placed? But the lecturer intimates that God cannot suffer, nor therefore sympathise, 'strictly speaking;' and yet would be willing to do that which would be incompatible with His nature, and is in fact impossible. I can find no warrant, either in the Old or New Testament, for such a mode of viewing the subject. There are no shams in the Bible. All is reality—a reality the entire force of which is beyond our feeble conceptions. So far from the language of Scripture appearing to convey more than is really meant, as expounders often teach (in regard to everything that is wide, enlarged, expanded), we may lay it down as a sound maxim, that the depth of meaning is far more profound and impressive than we are able to imagine from the imperfect analogies employed, as being the

only available means of illustration. Such analogies are never too strong, but always too weak. Those who explain away the sufferings of the Divine Nature might, with equal propriety, deny the Incarnation of the Son of God, as the scriptural declarations are equally strong in regard to both; and, indeed, I do not see how we can deny the sufferings, if we profess to believe in the Incarnation. I think the lecturer would have been as much warranted in saying, that the Incarnation was an impossibility, as that the sufferings of the Divine Nature are impossible. The one is as incomprehensible as the other; at least such is the case with my own mind. I believe in both, as, in my judgment, both are clearly and forcibly declared in the Volume of Inspiration; and although my limited faculties, which cannot understand my own complex nature, are unable to grasp the transcendent mysteries of the Divine Nature, I can yet feebly discern the suitability of the Incarnation and of Divine self-sacrifice to accomplish the purification, moral transformation, and elevation of the intelligent universe.

I am unable to comprehend how God can experience emotions of love or anger resembling those we feel. But the language of Scripture appeals to our emotions and consciousness as the only means of illustration by which we can form any conceptions respecting the Divine Nature; and I reverentially believe that, by receiving the words of Inspiration in their natural sense, we may derive ideas as accurate as we are capable of

entertaining on this exalted subject. Mr. Mansel, in 'Limits of Religious Thought,' says: 'When we speak of the anger or the pity of God, we do not mean that He is affected in precisely the same manner as we are when we feel those passions; and yet we have no conception of any other manner.' I think the same may be said of God's goodness, and of the sufferings of the Divine Nature. I believe Mr. Mansel is right in disclaiming the rule laid down by some theologians, that '*Affectus in Deo denotat effectum*,' and nothing more. He seems to quote with approbation the suggestion offered by Bishop Browne, 'Though there are, literally speaking, no such passions in God as love or hatred, joy or anger, or pity; yet there may be inconceivable perfections in Him, some-way answerable to what those passions are in us, under a due regulation and subjection to reason.' We may feel assured that the statements in the Bible concerning the Divine Nature are not of a delusive character, but are intended to convey to our minds an important *reality*, in as accurate a manner as our limited capacities can grasp. This remark applies to the emotions of anger, pity, love, joy, as ascribed to God in the Sacred Volume, and equally so to grief, vexation, and suffering. We are bound to suppose that something real is meant in all cases, and ought to form our conceptions of the impressive and solemn reality from the analogies which the Sacred Writers refer to in illustration of the subject.

It seems to me that the conception of Newton

points in a right direction, when he speaks of the 'boundless uniform sensorium' of God, which suggests the notion of an illimitable extent of sensibility with all that occurs in the universe. The human sensorium feels, through the nervous system, all that affects the body. The Divine sensorium is acutely conscious of every pulsation, throb, and pang, throughout the whole extent of creation. If we, with our limited capacities, endeavour to realise the thought, that all creatures, the most depraved as well as the most holy, 'live and move and have their being'\* in God; and, at the same time, are impressed by the affecting declaration, that 'God is love,' we cannot avoid the inference, that the depravity and misery of some creatures must produce sorrow in the Divine Nature, even as the holiness and happiness of others produce joy. We can form no conception of sorrow or joy, except from our own feelings; and the language of Scripture appeals to those feelings as the only mode of illustration available. I can imagine it not only probable, but certain, that the Divine Mind, as pre-eminently characterised by love, may behold temporary depravity and misery, during a period of discipline however prolonged, with a mitigated sorrow compatible with serenity and happiness; but not hopeless, endless depravity and misery. I believe it is as false and calumnious to assert, that the essential and pre-

\* Acts xvii. 28. The declaration of St. Paul refers to all men, the wicked as well as the righteous; and that made by Daniel to Belshazzar indicates the same great truth. Dan. v. 23.



eminent quality of the Divine Nature—love—could be satisfied in the contemplation of never-ending anguish and corruption, as would be the allegation that an affectionate mother could be happy while one of her children was in a state of misery. It is a necessity of the Divine Nature, as it is exhibited in the Bible, to seek the welfare of all His creatures. Their errors, weaknesses, follies, crimes, and ingratitude will not prevent the accomplishment of His gracious purposes towards them. The beautiful parables of the Saviour indicate how greatly the Creator, and all pure and benevolent beings are moved at the sight of sin and sorrow. It may, I think, be said, that the salvation of one sinner would be a guarantee that all would be saved, as it would prove that the difficulties of the case (which are identical in principle, though differing in the degree of perversity and depravity) were not insurmountable. The elevated wisdom of God is represented in the Bible, as having conciliated the requirements of His position as Governor of the universe, and the promptings of His tenderness and compassion, in a manner so harmonising that ‘righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’\* The difficulties which occasion such protracted disorder, confusion, and misery, and render the process of recovery so extremely slow (according to our notions of results) are, I think, referred to in Rom. viii. 20, when it is said ‘the creature was made subject to vanity

\* Psalm lxxxv. 10.

. . . . in hope.' The direct agency of God the Holy Spirit is employed in applying the measures of regeneration, illumination, and sanctification, with an earnest, patient, steady, and unwearied persistence, and yet with a self-restraint and reticence the consideration of which suggests very impressive thoughts, and tends to assist our perception as to the nature of the difficulties to be overcome. I believe the declarations of the Bible, and the knowledge we have respecting our mental and moral constitution, may enable us to surmise much in regard to the mysterious problems of the universe. I shall venture to call attention to the gleams of light which shine upon us, with harmonious lustre, from the Books of Revelation, Providence, and Nature, in the midst of the gloom which has bewildered and oppressed Humanity in all ages. In the meantime I will close this chapter with some passages of Holy Writ, which indicate the ultimate solution of the dark enigmas. Rom. viii. 20, 21: 'The creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope; because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' Ephes. i. 3, 9, 10: 'The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . . having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself: that in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and

which are on earth, even in Him.' Col. i. 19, 20 :  
'For it pleased the Father that in Him should all  
fulness dwell ; and having made peace through the  
blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things  
unto Himself ; by Him, I say, whether they be things  
in earth or things in heaven.' Heb. i. 2 : 'Whom  
He hath appointed heir of all things.' 1 John ii. 2 :  
'He is the propitiation for our sins ; and not for  
ours only, but also for the sins of the whole  
world.'

### CHAPTER III.

IF WE are to believe the theological dogmas which have been handed down to us by our forefathers, we must necessarily suppose that the Gospel scheme of mercy has been of little benefit to the children of Adam. If they are to be received as true, it becomes impossible for an intelligent man, who reads the past history of the world, and contemplates its present aspect, to cherish the hope that even a hundredth part of those who have lived beyond the age of infancy have derived any appreciable advantage from the manifestation of compassion and love, which the sufferings and death of the Saviour display. According to the systems of divinity which are authoritatively inculcated among us we must conclude, that perhaps ten out of every thousand adults have been saved ; and that the rest, after experiencing the benevolent protection of the Creator in this life, have been abandoned by Him to hopeless, never-ending ruin of the most fearful character. Yet the advent of the Redeemer was announced by the angelic messenger, as ‘ Good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people ;’ and the Apostle emphatically delineates the character of God as being most

fully expressed by one word—‘love.’ How can we profess to believe these and numerous other passages, indicating the most comprehensive tenderness and goodness, and continue to hold frightful dogmas which were only fitted for ages familiar with scenes of cruelty and blood? It seems to me, that even the most violent effort of intellectual perversity cannot produce a semblance of congruity between such dogmas and the gracious declarations to which I have adverted. What should we now think of an amnesty the practical working of which, under the superintendence of a government styling itself enlightened and compassionate, would be to compel about ten out of a thousand, by a species of strong constraint, to avail of its merciful provisions, and to consign the rest to a life of torture? In what estimation should we hold the pretensions of a physician who, having the uncontrolled management of a hospital, were to succeed in curing only the hundredth part of the patients? Yet theologians attribute a course of conduct as inconsistent, and a failure of results as glaring, to the wise and beneficent Sovereign of the universe and the skilful Physician of souls. After putting forth these monstrous perversions of Scripture with a severe air of authority, which cannot brook even the most modest hesitation of assent, they call upon all men to contemplate, with rapturous gratitude and admiration, the picture of clemency they have drawn, and the delineation of curative skill they have portrayed!

The ideas of religious teachers as to the difference made by the Creator in His dealings with men, are not based on any intelligible principles of justice, mercy, expediency, or necessity. All men are represented as guilty, and all as being unwilling, and morally unable, to avail of the gracious invitations of the Gospel. The virtues of the great sacrifice for sin are stated to be adequate for the pardon of all transgressors, however numerous or culpable ; and the transforming influences of the Holy Spirit are declared to be capable of bringing the most aggravated cases of darkness and depravity under the dominion of light, purity, and love. Yet we are told that the remedial measures will only be applied to a few ; not because they are less guilty, or more willing, but on account of what some theologians call the inscrutable decrees of God. Other divines give a more specific reason, which, I think, is fairly represented by the following quotation from the works of the Rev. Robert Hall : ‘ If the eternal misery of a certain number can be rendered conducive to a greater amount of good, in relation to the universe at large, than any other plan of action, then the attribute of goodness requires it.’ I shall endeavour to show that the decrees or purposes of God, as they are indicated in the Bible, contemplate universal holiness and happiness as the ultimate result of His vast schemes and plans.

The argument in favour of inflicting eternal punishment on some for the general good derives no support from earthly analogies. We have found that the ill-treatment of coloured races, for the

supposed advantage of the whites, does not, in the long run, work well for the latter. We are also beginning to see clearly, that public executions are destitute of moral benefit; and that the welfare of the community is far better promoted by enlightened and merciful efforts to make chastisement the means of reformation than by the indiscriminate assemblage of vice and criminality in the old-fashioned dens and dungeons which our ancestors constructed, and which afforded a fitting illustration of the hell depicted by their ferocious fancy.

But the ministers of religion, in general, do not attempt to sustain the doctrine of everlasting depravity and misery by philosophical arguments. They assert, with an air of confidence, that it is taught in the Bible; and a large proportion of them profess to regard those who doubt it as being enemies of religion. I have gone through the New Testament several times, and have drawn out all the texts referring to the misery of the wicked after this life, which are numerous. But among them I can discover very few upon which (as it appears to me) it is possible to found the doctrine of eternal punishment. On the other hand, the passages which seem to indicate universal salvation are numerous and varied, and I shall bring them forward in due time. The most intelligent theologians lay it down as a sound rule, that the proper way, and, in fact, the only way, to elicit the true sense of Scripture, is to compare one part with another, and to seek harmony and con-

sistency in the whole. I think that rule is necessarily implied in the command of the Saviour, 'Search the Scriptures;' that it may be gathered from the general tenor of Apostolic teaching; and that it is in strict conformity with the dictates of intelligence. Yet I cannot see that theologians have followed that rule in reference to the texts on which they found the doctrine of eternal punishments, as compared with others which indicate the scope and design of the Gospel remedy. To a few texts they assign the most extreme meaning of which they could be made susceptible if standing alone. But other passages, which are as absolute and still more, in their terms, they weaken and dilute in a way which deprives them of any intelligible signification. I will merely give a few instances at present. The declarations of the Saviour in Matt. xxv.: 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire . . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment,'\* are interpreted to mean never-ending misery. But the beautiful and comprehensive delineation of the Divine nature, 'God is love,' has been so reduced and dwarfed from its noble proportions, by traditionary glosses and modern expositions, that it is made practically to signify nothing more than that God loves the comparatively few

\* I shall endeavour to show, in the next chapter, that this impressive parable ought not to be understood as exhibiting the awful incidents of the last judgment, but the principles on which the Mediatorial rule is conducted in this world and the next, under the *régime* of the kingdom of heaven.



who are redeemed. Theologians have dealt in like manner with the glorious and absolute declarations that God will 'gather together in one all things in Christ;' that it is the good pleasure of the Father, 'having made peace through the blood of his cross, to reconcile all things unto Himself.' Such passages as these, they say, do not mean 'all,' but some among Jews, and some among Gentiles, probably a large number from each section. Again, St. Paul says in 1 Tim. iv. 10: 'We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.' This, they allege, simply means that God manifests kindness to all men in this life, but really only saves the elect. It seems to me that it is impossible to conceive more unwarrantable perversions of glorious and benevolent declarations. Could it be said that God is the Saviour of all men, if, after passing some years in comparative comfort, the greater or any part are to be plunged in irretrievable and endless anguish? Would the terms 'gather together all things in Christ,' or 'reconcile all things unto Himself,' be employed, if such a blessed consummation only referred (among the human family) to some Jews and some Gentiles, leaving the greater part unreconciled and at enmity for ever? Would the Son of God be called 'heir of all things' in such a case? Would the Saviour have said: 'God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved,' if the practical effect were to be the irreversible condem-

nation of a large portion of mankind? I am at a loss to understand how theologians could have ventured to deal in such an inconsistent manner with these two classes of texts; giving an absolute and unrestricted meaning to those which, on a superficial examination, appear harsh, arbitrary, and partial, and adhering pertinaciously to that contracted view; while, at the same time, they trim down, gloss over, and almost nullify those which exhibit benevolent intentions of an enlarged nature. The arrogant and intolerant attitude of some among them is still more surprising. They ought to have admitted that there are texts which seem to indicate universal salvation; while other passages apparently declare that a large portion of the race of Adam, and also of the angelic hosts, will remain for ever alienated from God, and in a state of misery and corruption. They might reverentially have acknowledged their inability to reconcile the two classes of texts, and to comprehend fully what is stated concerning the eternal destinies of sinners. At the same time, they might have enforced the clear, unequivocal, and solemn declarations of the Bible, in regard to the awful situation of those who leave this life in a state of enmity against God. Instead of that, they have persisted in making one-sided statements, in the most imperious manner, on the strength of a few texts, without weighing the restraining and modifying influences of numerous and varied passages, the thoughtful consideration of which gives to the whole subject an entirely

different aspect. Their arrogance and intolerance extend still further. They are not satisfied with having ruthlessly 'shut the doors of mercy on mankind;' but even venture to stigmatise it as a crime against the great Source of benignity and goodness, to cherish the faintest glimmering of hope that, during the immeasurable cycles of eternity, the elevated wisdom and comprehensive benevolence of the Creator will gradually dissipate all darkness and error, and transform corruption and malignity into purity and love.

I do not question the piety and sincere convictions of the theologians, ancient and modern, who have been and are upholding these frightful dogmas. They have been acting in good faith; even as Saul of Tarsus when persecuting the Christians, or as thousands of persons in our own day (including ministers of religion) who unhesitatingly believed that slavery was a blessing. I have known many such, of whose kindness and general intelligence I could entertain no doubt, who had been accustomed to slavery from infancy, and had always seen it approved and defended by those whom they revered and loved. It is only a few years ago that I heard some estimable men conversing on the prospects of that institution. It was a short time before the American War. They expressed the belief, that the attacks against it (which they attributed to ignorance and fanaticism, when sincere) were diminishing under the influence of more enlightened sentiments; that its sway would soon be extended; and that even the African

slave-trade, with more humane arrangements in its general details, would be revived. I can distinctly recollect the painful conviction which forced itself upon my mind, that those men were actually incapable of discerning and recognising the hateful and incurable features of slavery; not from a deficiency of natural intelligence, but because they had, from childhood, been taught to regard as humane and just that which was essentially cruel and oppressive. In like manner it appears almost impossible for persons, however intelligent and kind-hearted, to free themselves from any set of theological opinions, even of the most monstrous and cruel nature, if they have been instilled, from the early age of infancy, by revered instructors, and have become interwoven with all the fibres of thought. It has required many thousand years to unveil the noxious qualities of slavery to the discernment of mankind, although they were as hateful at the commencement as they are now. I would ask attention to this fact, while endeavouring to expose the real and essential properties of the theological opinions which still prevail among Christians. I submit that we cannot consistently regard their antiquity, and the sanction they have received from a long succession of pious and intelligent men, as indisputable proofs of their soundness. That plea has been found unavailing on behalf of slavery, as well as in regard to many sentiments and practices which we have been compelled to modify and alter during the present century, and to which I referred in the first

chapter. There is so much error in the views we entertain on almost every subject, that we ought to shake off the habits of indolence and obstinacy which we are naturally prone to indulge. Finality, in the clear, complete, and well-proportioned discernment of great truths, does not reside in us. Those truths are to be found in the Sacred Volume ; but we can only make progress in their just appreciation by a steady and energetic persistence in earnest, conscientious efforts. The experience of the present century ought to have dissipated the folly of attributing unchangeable stability to human institutions and systems of doctrine.

I have alluded to the recent modifications of human ideas in regard to slavery, as illustrating the absurdity of considering any opinions to be sound, merely because they have the seal of antiquity attached to them. But I have also another object in view. Our forefathers handed down slavery to us ; and they also handed down certain systems of theology. I contend that their views on slavery were consistent with their schemes of religious dogmas. The abolition of slavery would never have been effected by the class of sentiments which those dogmas inspired, as there was no sense of incongruity produced. That sense of incongruity has resulted from the direct and free perusal of the Scriptures by the community at large, in some of the most important countries of Christendom, during the last three hundred years. The efforts for the abolition of slavery were chiefly made by men whose minds and hearts had not

been obscured and paralysed by the study of systematic theology. The views held by our ancestors in regard to the relations of God towards the human race did not tend to diffuse benevolent and kindly sentiments. They represented the Creator as acting with very restricted benevolence, in that portion of the universe of which we have any knowledge. The most enlightened among them expressed the belief that, for wise and salutary purposes, of an inscrutable nature, a large proportion of mankind would be left in a state of depravity and misery for ever. They interpreted the most gracious and comprehensive passages in the Bible in subordination to those which appeared contracted, harsh, and cruel. If they firmly believed that the Creator was acting on such principles as they depicted, with a view to the general good, it was not difficult for them to advocate the adoption of an analogous course in human affairs. But some of the most eminent guides of religious thought seem hardly to have entertained a perception that the restricted operation of God's goodness was designed to serve the general welfare. Calvin, in his 'Institutes,' says: 'God could convert to good the will of the wicked. Why then does He not? Because He would not. Why He would not remains with Himself.' Luther, in his work, 'De Servo Arbitrio,' declares: 'This is the acme of faith, to believe that He is merciful, who saves so few and who condemns so many; that He is just, who, at His own pleasure, has made us necessarily doomed to damnation.' These are terrible opinions, little

calculated to produce benevolent feelings. I suppose almost every one will admit that, if men believe that God is acting with benevolence and kindness, they will feel much stronger inducements to be kind and benevolent, than if the Divine government appears harsh and cruel to them. It can scarcely be said that the Reformers were powerfully impressed with a conviction of the Divine goodness, or even of the Divine justice. They considered it a duty to believe that God is just and good, but could not perceive that He was so in the course of conduct which they attributed to Him. They could only perceive, at most, that He was effectively good and kind to a small portion of the human race. Such a view of the Divine administration was certainly not incongruous with a hearty acquiescence in slavery. Nor, indeed, is the opinion which writers of more modern date have expressed, that the general good of the universe will be promoted by leaving a large portion of intelligent beings under the everlasting dominion of depravity and misery. The advocates of slavery have also attempted to justify that hateful institution, by the plea that it was designed and calculated to effect purposes of general utility, although bearing harshly on the enslaved. It is a happy circumstance for Humanity, that the tender and benignant character of God, as exhibited in the Gospel, has, through the circulation of the Bible, exercised an influence upon the currents of modern thought, to counteract, in some degree, the narrow-minded and cruel theories which theolo-

gians have invented. As one of the consequences, slavery is being destroyed, and more benevolent ideas are entertained in regard to the relations of man to man, than our forefathers were able to attain. But when the glorious truths concerning God's vast and gracious purposes are better comprehended, and we behold 'the Father of the spirits of all flesh' employed in accomplishing the permanent welfare of all His intelligent creatures, we shall be far more imbued than we are with kindly sentiments towards each other, and towards all our fellow-men.

It seems to me that the design of Election has been altogether misapprehended by theologians. That great and important doctrine, which is so prominently exhibited in the Apostolic writings, has been deprived of its salutary tendencies, and has been made repulsive to intelligent and sympathetic minds. Some theologians have alleged that election, or a pre-existent determination to save a certain portion of the sinful children of Adam, was necessary to prevent the Atonement from becoming a total failure in its results (Toplady clearly expressed that idea). Others have stated that God loved certain persons from all eternity, and that a covenant was made between the Father and the Son that they should be saved by the sufferings and death of the Son of God, and by the application of the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. According to those theories, the elect are chosen, long before they



come into existence, for no intelligible reason which can explain the immense contrast between their destiny and that of the multitude. It is not because God foresees that they will believe, and will become holy, and therefore selects them from among the children of men. Divines of the Calvinistic order specifically declare that faith and holiness are the fruits and effects of election, and not the cause; being produced by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, which are granted to the elect alone, and not to other men; so that, without those special influences, the elect must inevitably remain in the same hopeless situation as the rest of mankind, being naturally no better than others, neither less guilty, nor more inclined to serve God. Other theologians, who are more favourable to the doctrine of Free Will, have understood election as being the determination of God to bestow salvation on those who, He foresaw from all eternity, would persevere in faith and holiness. Some of the writers belonging to that school of doctrine (the Arminian) have denied the total depravity of the human race; and most of them seem to hold the opinion, that one of the effects of Christ's atonement was to modify the moral inability of sinful men to return to God, and to enable all men, by their natural faculties, to take some initiatory steps in a right direction. As far as I am aware, all the views concerning Election which have been put forward by theologians are comprised under one or other of the two divisions I have mentioned. Some of the

Calvinistic divines have gone further in their declarations than others, by distinctly introducing the doctrine of Reprobation; that is to say, the predestination of men to everlasting destruction by a Divine decree from all eternity, whereby they are doomed and condemned, individually and collectively, long before they come into existence. This doctrine is so repulsive to the human mind that very few have ventured to display it in its naked form. But Calvin himself seems boldly to have carried his opinions to their logical conclusions. In his 'Institutes' (book iii. chap. 23) he says: 'Many admit election in such a way as to deny that any are reprobated; but this is puerile and absurd; . . . whom God passes by He reprobates.' I will endeavour to exhibit his opinions more fully by a few extracts, which I think are fairly selected. Those opinions are still nominally held, either in a complete or modified form, by a large section of the Christian Church. Milman, in his 'History of Christianity,' says: 'The popular theology of most of the Protestant sects is but a modified Augustinianism,' which, as he states in another place, 'was worked up into a still more rigid and uncompromising system by the severe intellect of Calvin.' The following are extracts from the 'Institutes' of Calvin. 'The Lord deposited with Adam the endowments he chose to confer on the human nature, and therefore, when he lost the favours he had received, he lost them, not only for himself, but for us all. . . . The children were so vitiated in their parent, that they

became contagious to their descendants. . . . But the cause of the contagion is not in the substance of the body, or of the soul, but because it was ordained by God that the gifts which He conferred on the first man should by him be preserved or lost, both for himself and for all his posterity. . . . Original sin appears to be an hereditary pravity or corruption of our nature, diffused through all the parts of the soul, rendering us obnoxious to the Divine wrath, and producing in us those works which the Scripture calls works of the flesh. . . . Our nature being so totally vitiated and depraved, we are, on account of this very corruption, considered as convicted and justly condemned in the sight of God, to whom nothing is acceptable but righteousness, innocence, and purity. . . . Therefore, infants themselves, as they bring their condemnation into the world with them, are rendered obnoxious to punishment by their own sinfulness, not by the sinfulness of another. For though they have not yet produced the fruits of their iniquity, yet they have the seeds of it within them ; even their whole nature is, as it were, a seed of sin, and therefore cannot but be odious and abominable to God. . . . The will is so bound by the slavery of sin that it cannot excite itself, much less devote itself, to anything good ; for such a disposition is the beginning of a conversion to God, which in the Scriptures is solely attributed to Divine grace. . . . The will is converted from an evil into a good one entirely by God. We are not sufficient even to think. Whatever is good in the

human will is the work of grace. . . . Man is not possessed of free will for good works, unless he be assisted by grace, and that special grace which is bestowed on the elect alone in regeneration. For I stop not to notice those fanatics who pretend that grace is offered equally and promiscuously to all.' The foregoing extracts are taken from book ii. of the 'Institutes,' and, I think, give a fair idea of the views of Calvin on the points to which they refer. A complete understanding of them, however, can only be acquired by a careful perusal of his very voluminous work, which, although written by him in early life, was, I believe, fully approved by his maturer age. He evidently had a far more logical mind than Arminius, and his conclusions are drawn by an irresistible process of reasoning, from his fundamental propositions. To my mind the great and fatal defect of his system is, that his fundamental propositions are not in accordance with the declarations of the Bible. The account he gives of the fall is not only harsh but puerile. It does not exhibit the elevated wisdom, and the noble plan of general utility, which we may discern if we carefully study the Sacred Volume. It is not true that the fate of Humanity was placed in the keeping of Adam and Eve. They were totally unqualified for such a charge, and we have no just grounds to suppose that they had any extended or clear conception of the possible or probable effects which might flow from their obedience or disobedience. The destinies of the human race are, and have always been, in the hands of a wise

firm, and benevolent Creator, whose tender mercies are over all His works, and whose essential and pre-eminent quality of love is not confined, but unrestricted in its inexhaustible immensity. The intimate relations between Adam and his descendants, between all parents and children, and the inexorable operation of the law of mutual influences for good and evil, were organised, not to produce injury, but to work out gradually the well-being of all. 'The creature was made subject to vanity . . . . in hope.' The human spirit awakes to consciousness, with no knowledge respecting God, or its own relations to the universe. The brute creation is guided by instinct, which is a sort of forcible or mechanical knowledge, circumscribed and invariable in its nature and action. The human spirit is to be disciplined, developed, and elevated by knowledge acquired from experience, which is the only true and real knowledge, and which is illimitable as regards its progressive stores of acquisition. It is not true that infants are regarded with abhorrence by the Creator, on account of the seeds of evil which are in them. There is nothing in the Bible to justify such an allegation, although it is logically consistent with the conceptions entertained by Calvin of God, His character, and the nature of His government. Milman in his 'History of Latin Christianity' says, in reference to the doctrines taught by Augustine: 'The only point in this theory at which human nature uttered a feeble remonstrance, was the abandonment of infants, who never knew the distinction between good and

evil, to eternal fires. The heart of Augustine wrung from his reluctant reason, which trembled at its own inconsistency, a milder damnation in their favour. But some of his more remorseless disciples disclaimed the illogical softness of their master.' It would appear that the stern and uncompromising intellect of Calvin successfully repressed any tender emotions which the contemplation of helpless infancy might have inspired in his breast.\* The views of Calvin on Election, and the consequences he draws from that doctrine, are also quite consistent with the principles which he unfolds, but are opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, and to numerous passages of Scripture. The system of Arminius is not logical, I think, and has not the same cohesiveness in its several parts; yet, substantially, it breathes much more of the spirit of the Gospel than that of Calvin. As far as I can discern his ideas on Election, they seem to be confused and vague. In the catechisms published by order of the Wesleyan Conference I was unable to find any mention of that important doctrine. I suppose the Wesleyans are the most prominent representatives of Arminianism at the present time. Luther appears to have abstained from giving a definition of Election in his catechism; or in the supplementary articles on Christian Faith and Doctrine, but I suppose he has done so in other works. The Articles of the Church of England

\* It seems incredible that men holding such notions have shaped the religious thoughts of Christendom, and are still regarded by many as almost infallible.

define Election to be a measure for the good of the elect, without indicating a wider object.

I believe I may say with justice and truth, that, whatever differences of opinion have been and are entertained in regard to Election, no section of the Christian Church has ever regarded it as an important part of a vast scheme of universal benevolence, designed to accomplish the permanent welfare of all the intelligent creatures of God. No one seems ever to have supposed that our Saviour indicated the design of election when He said: 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.' It has always been and still is understood, as intended to serve purposes of restricted benevolence for the good of the elect, individually and collectively, except in so far as their presence and influence on earth may tend to diminish the corruption and sufferings of the rest of mankind, during the present life. Some, indeed, have imagined, from the intimations of the Bible, that, at a later period of the earth's history, there will be a far larger number of the elect living at the same time; and that, perhaps, all the inhabitants of the world, during a thousand years, will be under the hallowed sway of love to God and love to man. But not one of those who are called orthodox theologians has apparently ever supposed that the countless myriads who have passed away from the earth, since the time of Adam, without knowing and loving God, will derive any real benefit from the Atonement of the Saviour, or the

mysterious principle of Election. Consequently, I am justified in saying that Election is represented as only producing restricted good by all, and as a measure of favouritism and partiality by some, for the exercise of which no intelligible grounds are assigned. We are told that the Atonement of Christ is adequate for the pardon of all sinners, however numerous and guilty; also that the efficacy of Divine influences is illimitable in its capacity to enlighten, regenerate, and sanctify. Yet we are assured that only a part of the children of men will have pardon extended to them; and only to such will those influences be so applied as to secure their salvation; while the rest will be abandoned to everlasting depravity, anguish, and despair. No attempt is made to explain the principles in operation, which produce such awful distinctions in the destinies of the human race. It seems to be assumed by theologians, as an incontrovertible axiom, that it would have been quite consistent with the character of God to leave all His sinful creatures in a state of everlasting ruin, and that the salvation of some is a superabundant proof of compassion and tenderness, which was not imperatively demanded by the elevated qualities of the Creator. I contend that such an assumption is not warranted by the Bible, which represents the Divine Nature as pre-eminently characterised by love, and therefore necessarily prompting the Creator to seek the welfare of all His creatures. It is a solemn question, whether the cruel theories and ferocious dogmas of theologians, calling themselves Christian, do not spring



from the same cause as the hideous doctrines of Pagan teachers—that is, the malignity engendered by moral evil. Have these self-styled expounders of the Bible calumniated God, perverted His gracious declarations, and rendered it almost impossible for mankind to venerate and love their Maker; or have they spoken the words of truth, under the authority of revelation?

The statements of religious teachers, respecting the condition of the redeemed and the lost in a future life, appear to me singularly unimpressive, which I attribute to their want of conformity with the declarations of the Bible. They do violence to the most kindly sympathies of the human heart, present to the mind conflicting and inconsistent ideas, and contain assertions which are opposed to the solemn lessons taught in the Books of Nature and Providence. The notions which divines instil concerning Heaven are extremely insipid, being chiefly formed by the indiscriminate assemblage of absolute negations, unrelieved by shades of difference and gradations of colour. The effect of negatives on the mind is never very forcible, and in this case it is confused and weakened by the counteractive influence of positive affirmations, which do not seem to harmonise with the negations. There is to be no sin, no pain, no sorrow, which are all completely to cease, immediately after death, as if by the operation of an instantaneous and magic charm. In this assertion, the analogies we have constantly before us of gradual processes

in physical, intellectual, and moral results, are altogether disregarded, although I believe they are steadily kept in view in the Scriptural account of a future state. A sudden insensibility is to extinguish the fond memories of earth, and eternal separations from many who were dearly loved are to have no effect on the unruffled felicity of the blessed. The pious\* and affectionate mother is called upon to rejoice in the prospect of her own everlasting happiness, and to believe that, however much she may grieve for the evil conduct of a son in this life, she will hereafter contemplate his endless depravity and hopeless ruin with a mild serenity, and with no abatement in her joy. The

\* There is an interesting illustration in regard to the maternal and paternal feelings, under such circumstances, of those who have what are called evangelical views. It is in 'The Pilgrim and the Shrine,' and I extract the passage from a notice of the book in the London 'Times' of December 30, 1868. The book is apparently written by a young Cambridge undergraduate, intended for the Church, but who had imbibed infidel opinions. While dangerously ill, and anticipating death, in a far-distant land, he speculates thus, in regard to the probable feelings of his parents: 'My mother would feel, though hardly owning it to herself, "If the Almighty has a mother's heart, He will consider that perhaps the intention of her erring son is not bad; that he believes himself to be right, poor fellow, but has some strange twist of mind." But it would be to her a perpetual suffering. And my father? He would resign himself, with a sigh, to the inscrutable Divine decree that makes a son of his a reprobate, and try to comfort himself with the belief that it is all for the glory of God, and therefore a cause of ultimate rejoicing to everybody except myself, who, by getting my deserts hereafter for my sinfulness, will glorify God by my torments.' I do not think this is a caricature, or a distorted representation of the feelings and opinions of those who call themselves orthodox *evangelical* Christians; that is to say, pre-eminently entitled to be considered as able to understand the nature of the Gospel, or 'the good tidings of great joy.'

placidity of the redeemed is not to be disturbed by the remembrance of their own weaknesses, follies, and criminality, even when they behold the irreparable injuries which their mischievous inconsistencies and evil conduct on earth may have inflicted on the eternal destinies, as well as the present existence, of their fellow-creatures. It is worthy of notice that in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, our Saviour seems to intimate that even the lost feel anxiety that the objects of their earthly tenderness may escape the sufferings of a future state. I can see no warrant in Scripture for the supposition that, among the inhabitants of heaven, the tender, pure, and hallowed emotions of affection will be diminished, or that sentiments of general benevolence will be weakened. On the contrary, we are led to believe that charity or love will be perpetual, and shall never fail, being still greater than faith or hope, inasmuch as its influence transforms the spirit into a resemblance to God Himself. The conceptions of divines in regard to the occupations of heaven are distressingly meagre and dull. They do little more than convey the impression that the redeemed will be everlastingly employed in singing the praises of the Creator and Redeemer. That seems to have been the limit to which the ideas of the pious and excellent Baxter extended; and, so far as I can see, it has received little, if any, enlargement since his time. The idea is, indeed, a noble one, and shows the difference between Christianity and Paganism. The latter inculcated very faintly, if at all, any

feelings of gratitude and love towards the Deity. The shades of heroes in the Elysian Fields were supposed to be employed in chanting their own praises. Yet, although the idea is noble, it is extremely confined. It is strange that no man of genius has arisen among Christians to apply the loftiest efforts of the imagination to a theme so glorious and elevated. It may be replied that, in the absence of information under Divine authority, the highest flights of fancy would be erratic and misleading. I believe the real explanation is, that the orthodox representations of God 'freeze the genial current of the soul.' It seems to me that the Bible does afford intimations which might raise the human spirit to celestial heights, and a vast expanse of vision, if Christians had not misconceived the essential features of Heaven, and had not distorted views of the character of God. The pious Jews of old possessed hardly any direct statements respecting a life beyond the grave. Yet our Saviour said that the doctrine of the Resurrection was established by strong inference from the declaration, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.'\* It is clear, therefore, that we are authorised to employ our intelligence in a similar manner, for the elucidation of great truths concerning the invisible world; and I submit that we have greatly increased resources for that purpose. Religious writers make some weak efforts to animate Christians, by the declarations of Scripture that the

\* Matt. xxii. 31, 32.

redeemed will be in the presence of God, and will for ever be with Christ, and in the society of blessed and holy spirits. But, unhappily, such representations lose much of their force, owing to the erroneous impressions which the frightful systems of theology convey respecting the character and purposes of God. How can a man really love God, and rejoice in the prospect of seeing Him, if he believes (as is taught in Baxter's 'Saints' Rest') that God will take pleasure in the everlasting misery of the lost? If a father is loving to his children, but extremely harsh to servants and dependants, he cannot possibly inspire as much confidence and affection as one who, not only manifests tenderness to his family, but also benevolence and considerate kindness to all others. The ideas which Christians have of God produce awe and distrust, rather than love. There is much truth, I think, in the opinion expressed by the author of 'Ecce Homo,' that 'the direct love of Christ, as it was felt by His first followers, is a rare thing among modern Christians. The prevalent feeling towards Him now, among religious men, is an awful fear of His supernatural greatness, and a disposition to obey His commands, arising partly from dread of future punishment, and partly from a nobler feeling of loyalty, which, however, is inspired rather by His office than His person. Beyond this we may discern in them an uneasy conviction, that He requires a more personal devotion, which leads to spasmodic efforts to kindle the feeling, by means of violent raptures of pane-

gyric, and by repeating over and getting by rote the ardent expressions of those who really had it.'

The representations concerning the lost are, if possible, still more incongruous, and they appear to produce very little impression, either upon those who make a religious profession, or on the community at large. They present before us a fearful picture of indiscriminating ruin and ever-increasing anguish, with no checks to the terrible law of unceasing progression in depravity and consequent misery, which must operate on those who are under the absolute dominion of moral evil. It is true that an effort is sometimes made to intimate differences and gradations; but neither the intellect nor the fancy can easily lay hold of them. In this life we are able to trace the varying results and effects of different principles, qualities, and courses of action, and can draw impressive lessons from them. There is the effect of true religion on the spirit in its secret movements and emotions; and likewise on the temper, the demeanour, and the conduct, as more outwardly manifested. There is also the effect of industry, prudence, and sagacity in acquiring wealth; the effect of justice, kindness, and courtesy in winning esteem and affection. The law of causes and consequences operates steadily and unbendingly. Some men have apparently no genuine religious principles and emotions; and yet, if they are industrious and prudent, equitable, kind, and courteous, they reap the fruits of those qualities. Now it seems to me that theologians make state-

ments which practically nullify the action of the law of causes and consequences in the invisible world. From the views they put forward, it would appear to be of little consequence, so soon as the present existence is terminated, whether a man has been an affectionate husband and father, and has dealt justly and kindly with his fellow-men; or whether his life has been characterised by malignity, selfishness, and a callous disregard of the claims of family ties and social obligations. If all those who have not in this life been united to God by saving faith in Christ, and by the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, are to be plunged in a gulf of endless despair, without light and hope, the intellect and fancy vainly endeavour to discern shades of difference and gradations of suffering, calculated to exercise a wholesome check on human follies and crimes in this life. It is pretended that the doctrine of everlasting punishments has a deterring and restraining influence. But I am at a loss to see how such a Draconian Code as that advocated by theologians can possibly exert any beneficial restraint, any more than the judicial system formerly prevailing in England which punished almost every conceivable offence by death. The horrors of this unmitigated perdition are said to be destined for almost all the human race. Baxter's 'Saints' Rest' is a popular work, widely circulated, and appears to have the unqualified approval of modern divines, as it is published by the Tract Society, with no indications of dissent from any of its statements. In it the

joys of Heaven are said to be designed for 'the chosen of God from all eternity.' It is added, 'that they are but a small part of mankind is too apparent in Scripture and experience.' In another place it is said: 'The saints shall look down upon the burning lake, and in the sense of their own happiness, and in the approbation of God's just proceedings, they shall rejoice and sing: 'Thou art righteous, O Lord, who wast, art, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.' That good, though narrow-minded, man ventured to apply in this manner a passage in Revelation xvi. 5, without the slightest warrant from the context, and regardless of the acknowledged difficulty of rightly understanding that mystic book. In this same work of Baxter, the Creator is also represented as taking pleasure in the everlasting misery of the lost ('He will take pleasure in their execution.' 'He shall rejoice in their calamity.'—Chap. vi.)

I derive from the Bible very different impressions from those which theological dogmas produce. I will quote some of the texts bearing on the subject. Rom. xiv. 10 and 12: 'We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ; . . . so then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.' 2 Cor. v. 10: 'For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.' 1 Cor. iii. 8, 13-15: 'Every man shall receive his own reward, according to his own labour. . . . Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the



day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide, which he hath built thereupon [that is, upon the foundation which is Jesus Christ, see verse 11] he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.' 1 Pet. i. 17: 'And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.' Matt. xii. 36: 'Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.' These declarations, and the whole tenor of the Sacred Volume, confirm and enforce the salutary lessons which the events of human life teach us. There is in operation an unrelenting law of causes and consequences, of sowing and reaping, the ramifications of which extend to the invisible world, and from which no responsible being can be delivered. This law must act in a painful manner, until the injuries produced by moral evil shall be completely extinguished. I understand the judgment (setting aside the gross conceptions which, I suppose, are now entertained by few) to be, in effect, the manifestation, to the clear appreciation of all intelligent beings, of individual character, of the intrinsic qualities of thoughts and feelings, of the tendencies and consequences of words and actions, both in their immediate and remote effects. When our Saviour said, 'The prince of this world is judged,' I con-

ceive the meaning to be, that the light shed by the Gospel immediately began to unveil the injurious character of the maxims and practices by means of which the spirit of evil had so long enslaved and degraded humanity. The clear and truthful appreciation of realities, laid bare and essentially disclosed—free from shams and delusions—will be infinitely extended in the invisible world. No human being, whether forming part of the elect or not, will escape from the vivid exhibition of what he has thought, felt, done, and said, and of the consequences which have resulted from his conduct and influence. The epitome of the life's history, and the ratio of progress made, or degradation suffered, by the spirit, as measured by comparative advantages and disadvantages, will perhaps be stamped far more clearly on the aspect of each than the lineaments and expression of the human visage in this world betray the secrets of past sorrows, follies, and crimes. Can it be said that the statements of theologians are consistent with the texts I have quoted? I think they rather encourage the supposition that the redeemed will escape judgment, in any sense that can be understood and realised by the human mind; and have a tendency to inspire delusive confidence and carelessness in those who imagine themselves (upon unscriptural grounds) to be the children of God. Very little effort is made to elucidate the solemn expressions 'scarcely saved,' 'seeming to come short of entering into his rest,' 'saved, yet so as by fire;' as contrasted with 'an

abundant entrance,' and the situation of the man who could say, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.'

The scriptural statements convey to my mind a forcible impression, that the elect will rejoice in the more or less clear perceptions of God's glorious character, and of His vast and benevolent purposes. None of them will have erroneous conceptions of God, although some will have far more enlarged and extended views than others; all will, however, enjoy the blissful consciousness of ever-growing knowledge and correct appreciation, as well as of a constant expansion of the noblest affections. They will all, individually and collectively, experience the most undoubting assurance of their participation in the Saviour's redeeming mercy and love. But their own follies and injurious conduct on earth will be no less distinctly appreciated by them, and will occasion a salutary pain, which will be mitigated and softened by the certainty that moral good will triumph over evil, and will ultimately efface all its bitter consequences and fruits. There will be a great difference among the redeemed, arising from their character and conduct in this life. They will all be in a region of light, and will see the benevolent visage of the Creator. But many of them must, during countless ages, of which we can have no conception, behold the noxious results of their influence and example in this life upon the destinies of others, extending through many generations on earth, and adding to the agonies of the lost in the regions

beyond the grave.\* Complete happiness, even among the redeemed, cannot be attained, until the frightful injuries inflicted by moral evil shall be completely extinguished; although it will be immeasurably greater on the part of those—if such there be—whose earthly life has been an unmixed blessing in its example and influence. To them will be granted such unobscured perceptions of the smiling face of God—such an elevated participation in the moral qualities of the Divine Nature, and such an energetic, intelligent, and influential share in carrying out His vast and comprehensive designs, that their felicity will more closely resemble that of the Creator, although it will not be absolutely unclouded, so long as depravity and misery exist in the universe. I believe all those who enter heaven will be at once delivered from the corrupting influence of moral evil; but that the degree in which they participate in the elevated qualities of the Divine character will be proportioned to the measure of sanctification to which they attain in this life.

I believe the Scriptural account represents the lost as being in a region of darkness, more or less intense—unable to see God's real character and to discern His purposes, because their spirits have never been enlightened, and because spiritual life has never yet commenced. They will be entirely removed from the assuaging influences, arising from physical causes and earthly relations, by

\* 'The evil that men do lives after them.'—SHAKESPEARE.

which the human spirit is lulled to fancied security, and seduced by present and prospective enjoyments in this life. Each spirit will experience the benefit or the injury which it may have derived in this life from the cultivation of kindness, justice, purity, self-restraint; or the indulgence in malignity, selfishness, injustice, and sensuality; but the material organisation, which either fostered good qualities or aggravated evil ones, will no longer interfere with the movements of the spirit. Each spirit will, as it were, emerge, in its naked reality, from this life into the next, with the impress of the deeds and qualities of its earthly career vividly stamped on it. Whatever good there is in it will not be torn from it, but will operate in its favour (without being checked by the Creator), in so far as it is possible to do. It will be seen to what extent the impress of earthly virtues can sustain the spirit, in the midst of the awful realities of eternity and the prospect of immortality, when not united to the Creator by the living bonds of faith and love. The intrinsic qualities of every sort of principle, every kind of thought and emotion, will be brought to light, and their practical value tested. If the neglect of God, and the disregard of the scheme of redemption, during this life, can, by the substitution of human virtues, suffice for the happiness of human spirits in the next world, the Creator will not prevent them from doing so, any more than He does in this life. That is the way I understand the declarations of the Bible. God is the Judge, not in the light of

inflicting arbitrary sentences, and disturbing a pleasant course of natural results; but as superintending important processes, which exhibit the undeviating connection of causes and consequences, and the real properties and tendencies of things, so as to make His creatures understand, intelligently and impressively, the sources of happiness and the sources of misery.

I think theologians express themselves in a confused and misleading way, concerning the solemn transactions in the invisible world. There will be no change in the constitution of things established by the Creator; the great principles we see in operation now will be upheld; the Creator will not interfere in an exceptional manner to bring disastrous results on any of His creatures. Whatever pains and penalties come upon them will be in the natural order of causes and effects. The difference between the present life and the next consists in this, that the operation of causes, as leading to inevitable consequences, is now in a great measure concealed from view; while in the next world those consequences become apparent to all. This is a time of probation, and there are many circumstances which produce a false impression, whereby men are led astray, if they rely simply on outward appearances. The present life furnishes abundant illustrations of calamitous results springing in a great degree from ignorance, heedlessness, and inexperience. Look at that man of feeble and unstable gait. He is not aged; yet he is already decrepit in mind and body. Twenty

years ago he gloried in a consciousness of bodily vigour which made him listen with incredulity to well-meant warnings to moderate the excesses in which he indulged. Every excess was working with destructive potency ; but he could not see it. There are various other ways in which men injure their health and shorten their days ; but they will not study the inexorable law of causes and consequences, and fall victims to their ignorance and folly. It is the same with reputation—position—wealth, which are often lost as much by heedlessness as by deliberate criminality. Multitudes sink into degradation, and pass away before their time, and we often cannot clearly discern why or how they have been destroyed, because the operation of causes is in a great degree concealed. Theologians speak as if the fate of men after death was to be fixed by something like arbitrary decrees. It is not so ; for it is written that every man will receive ‘according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.’ It is not right to say that some will be cast into hell and shut out of heaven. Heaven and hell are not localities, but conditions of the intellect and the heart. The worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched, are not outward ills inflicted by God on those who would otherwise be easy and happy. There are many men who suffer the pangs of hell long before they leave this life. The mind and heart accustomed to evil thoughts and depraved emotions cannot renounce them at will, but the fearful bondage and constant torment must continue,

until there is a moral transformation. If we turn from the revolting to the pleasing aspect of Humanity, we still find terrible deficiencies which forbid the possibility of immortal happiness. If it is as necessary for spirits to be united by living bonds with the great Source of light and love, as it is for animals and vegetable natures to have air, light, warmth, and nourishment, the absence of that union constitutes spiritual death. In this life the withered and blighted condition of spirits is concealed by the blending of the material and immaterial, and the complex relations of earth. But, as soon as those temporary circumstances are withdrawn, realities will become nakedly unveiled, and spirits will find themselves brought face to face with moral evil, and will see that in its true aspect, which they have been nurturing, or trifling with, under various disguises, incredulous of its deadly properties and regardless of the only mode of deliverance. Fearful spectacles will be presented to the sight of the universe, disclosing the real qualities of moral evil and its natural effects. If the checks and counteractives interposed in the present life are entirely withdrawn, the progression of evil must be fearful, and completely beyond our powers of computation and conception.

It is an interesting and important question, whether we can submit to a practical test the theological systems which have been handed down to us by our forefathers, and are still held by us. I think our Saviour indicated the nature of an efficient test,



when, speaking of false prophets, he said, ‘Ye shall know them by their fruits.’ The Apostle inculcated its application in the words (2 Cor. xiii. 5), ‘Prove your own selves;’ and (1 Thess. v. 21), ‘Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.’ Is the tendency of the dogmas which are enforced by systematic theology to enlighten the understanding, to elevate the thoughts and affections? Do they produce in the human mind and heart increased reverence and love towards God, and an expansion of charity and good-will towards men? Do they furnish strong motives for resistance against evil, and instil a growing appreciation of the noble principles of truth, equity, and benevolence? Do they implant profound convictions and earnest moral feelings? Do they enable us to perceive harmony and consistency between the different parts and various declarations of Scripture, and do they vindicate the claim of the Gospel to be considered ‘good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people’? I solemnly believe that the dogmatical teachings of theologians will not bear the application of such tests. The disorganised condition of opinions throughout Christendom abundantly proves it, as I endeavoured to show in the first chapter. The writings of religious teachers in our days do not generally wear the aspect of profound convictions and earnest moral feelings. Their defence of Christianity under attack is too often characterised by the ingenuity and plausibility of legal advocacy, which more frequently evades than fairly meets the substantial

features of the argument and the essential difficulties of the question. The great realities of the universe, in the relations of God to man and of men to each other, are not impressively exhibited by them. The evidence of this may be found in the predominance of short-sighted, misshapen expediency, over sterling, vital principle—in the exaggerated homage paid to vapid, though plausible, conventionalities—and in the limited, and I fear decreasing, operation of enlightened conscientiousness and faithfulness in every department of human life, even among those who are professors of religion. If theological writers had not given perverted and inconsistent interpretations of the eternal verities, which the Scriptures unfold, the human intellect must have clearly perceived, in this era of extended knowledge, that true, beneficially-working expediency in politics, whether international or domestic, consists in being guided by justice and benevolence, which produces internal strength and union, and conciliates the respect and good-will of other nations. The circulation of the Sacred Volume has done much to enlighten public opinion on those points; but its salutary influence has been checked by the perversion of some of the most important declarations which it contains. By representing the Divine administration as being so conducted as to manifest neither justice nor benevolence, in a large and extended sense, the ministers of religion have obscured and veiled those important attributes, and obstructed their efficient action upon human minds and hearts.

Those perverted views have so clouded and mystified great truths, that perhaps in no previous age has there been witnessed such an exhibition of decorous plausibilities and apparent sincerity in religious profession, combined with melancholy deficiencies of truth and integrity in trade, commerce, and all dealings between man and man, as at the present time. The laxity of sentiment and practice seems to pervade every region, and is perhaps as much seen among those who believe themselves to be true Christians as among those who make no special claim to that distinctive character. A hundred years ago there was much political corruption, and a fearful exhibition of profanity and vice. But then the ministers of religion, as a body, were in a state of deadness and inertia. During the last thirty years, there has been a great degree of outward homage paid to religious observances; the teachers of religion have been labouring with unprecedented activity and zeal; and books of a religious nature have been increased to an extent almost beyond the reach of computation. Yet, while outward decorum is generally enforced, and the claims of religion are externally acknowledged, the spirit of doubt, uncertainty, and unbelief seems to be penetrating into every circle, every class, every household; and the noble conscientiousness which springs from profound convictions and elevated principles is rarely discerned, either among the rich or among the poor. Religion has been walking 'in her golden slippers' (as Bunyan has it), and her

teachings, which have been received with so much outward respect and attention, ought surely to have implanted vital principles and clear perceptions. If they have not, there must be something wrong in the doctrines taught. The disorganised state of opinions and moral convictions which we are witnessing could not exist if religious teachers perceived clearly, and impressively enforced, what the Bible says concerning God, His justice, benevolence, and truth; concerning the tendencies and consequences of thoughts, feelings, and actions upon the personal character and the well-being of this life, and upon the condition and prospects of the spirit beyond the grave. If the tree is good, the fruit ought also to be good; 'for the tree is known by his fruit' (Matt. xii. 33).

I am led to draw the same inference from another leading characteristic of our days. I mean the bitter controversies, in Protestant communities, respecting questions of ritualism and ceremonial observances. It seems to me that any human mind which has earnest views and convictions in relation to the character and purposes of God, and the position of man in this life, and in reference to eternity, must regard as subordinate, and comparatively insignificant, all matters relating to vestments, bodily attitudes, physical movements, or any outward forms. I think any one who reads the Epistles of St. Paul may easily conjecture how such topics would have appeared to him. It would have been of small concern to him in what sort of dress he preached or prayed; and he would have

been guided by a sense of decorum and convenience, as well as by a readiness to be tolerant to the customs and preferences, or even to the harmless weaknesses of others. Although he had been a Pharisee, and was the son of a Pharisee, and had been taught to maintain a scrupulous adherence to a multiplicity of small observances, it seems evident that the contemplation of the great verities of Christianity had effaced those prejudices of infancy and education from his mind. So it must ever be. A man who is striving on behalf of grave and important interests, which he considers to be endangered, has neither time nor inclination to attend to comparative trifles. When there is a famine in a country, serious people do not discuss the best mode of ornamenting a dinner table. When a barbarous invasion threatens to desolate a land, the national council does not occupy itself with points of etiquette and costume. But it is alleged that ritualistic questions are not comparative trifles, as they possess, not only a conventional significance, but intrinsic and permanent importance in their own nature, as relating to intellectual and spiritual life. It is this view which renders them so seductive to many minds, and, at the same time, arouses an opposition to them from others, more strenuous and bitter than seems called for, by the childish trivialities which at first sight appear to be their worst faults. In connection with the exaggerated importance which is ascribed to changes of vesture, modulation of voice, and precisely regulated physical movements

and appliances of various kinds, as forming a serious and essential part of Divine worship, we may perceive an attempted revival of a strong sacerdotal system. Such a system first assumed, I believe, a definite form in the fifth century; and it seems to have been accepted by the most intelligent part of the community, as affording some relief to the human mind from the bewildering and repulsive features of the Augustinian theology, which also acquired a potent ascendancy at about the same period. This sacerdotal system, when tolerated by a laity having unrestricted access to the Scriptures, and to all other sources of knowledge, must, I think, be regarded as a refuge of weak and indolent minds from mental difficulties which perplex and render them uneasy. The tendency which we see in our day, among the most educated classes of a Protestant nation, to countenance ecclesiastical pretensions which were strenuously opposed, and in a great degree overthrown, by the Reformers, gives additional strength to my conviction, that the great truths of the Bible are not clearly and accurately understood. If they were, such pretensions would not be made by intelligent and pious clergymen; and no sane portion of the lay community could find any conceivable inducement to encourage them. We may, I think, derive some interesting and instructive lessons from the description given by Milman of the conflicting opinions which swayed and influenced Christendom in the fifth century, and may perceive the dangers to which human nature is

exposed in all ages. The following account seems almost to delineate some of the features of our own times. 'Latin Christianity, in its strong sacerdotal system, in its rigid and exclusive theory of the Church, at once admitted and mitigated the more repulsive parts of the Augustinian theology. Predestinarianism itself, to those at least within the pale, lost much of its awful terrors. The Church was the predestined assemblage of those to whom, and to whom alone, salvation was possible. The Church scrupled not to surrender the rest of mankind to that inexorable damnation entailed upon the human race by the sin of the first parents. . . Through the Church alone, and so through the hierarchy alone, man could be secure of that direct agency of God upon his soul after which it yearned with irrepressible solicitude. The will of man surrendered itself to the clergy, for on them depended its slavery or its emancipation, as far as it was capable of emancipation. In the clergy, Divine grace, the patrimony of the Church, was vested, and through them distributed to mankind. Baptism, usually administered by them alone, washed away original sin; the other rites and sacraments, of which they were the exclusive ministers, were still conveying, and alone conveying, the influences of the Holy Ghost to the more or less passive soul. This objective and visible form, as it were, which was assumed for the inward workings of God upon the mind and heart, by the certitude and security which it seemed to bestow, was so unspeakably

consolatory, and relieved—especially the less reflective mind—from so much doubt and anxiety, that mankind was disposed to hail with gladness, rather than examine with jealous suspicion, these claims of the hierarchy. Thus the Augustinian theology coincided with the tendencies of the age, towards the growth of the strong sacerdotal system; and the sacerdotal system reconciled Christendom with the Augustinian theology.’ Milman justly remarks, that the sacerdotal system is, in its essence, opposed to the Augustinian theology; and has a tendency to lead the mind towards Pelagianism, by exaggerating the efficacy of human agency. Such, indeed, was its practical effect, as exemplified during the ages succeeding its firm establishment. The blind submission of men to priestly authority became increasingly servile, as well as their reliance on a species of demigods whom they denominated saints; while the great truths of the Bible, respecting God and the way of salvation, were scarcely discerned. The soothing influence of the sacerdotal system can only be maintained by discouraging the vigorous efforts of the human intellect to exercise the rights which God has clearly bestowed; and by subjugating the spirit to the claims of paramount authority, as residing in the Church. Then it may soothe; but at a fearful cost, in its effect on the intellect and the heart. I do not believe that intelligent and earnest-minded men, who have an impressive sense of the stern and awful realities of the universe, as unfolded in the Sacred Volume, can



be brought to recognise ecclesiastical pretensions of such a nature. When I read the Epistles of the Apostle Paul, I cannot imagine it possible that he, as a man, could have sanctioned such claims, or could himself have assumed a dictatorial attitude, in regard to forms, ceremonies, and sacraments, as vitally connected with spiritual results. He would have been, and indeed he evidently was, impressed by the solemn declaration of the Saviour: 'God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.' Any forms, rituals, and ceremonial observances that were consistent with that all-important object would have been equally tolerated by him. Such matters as these are only shadows, symbols, and external aids to the movements of the intellect and the heart; and they are necessarily flexible and not fixed, being subject to modifications from changing tastes, ideas, and customs, as well as the greater or less degree of intellectuality in a community. The only exceptions to modifications would be the rites and ceremonies which were instituted under Divine authority for permanent observance, if such there be, which is denied by some Christians. They can only be elevated into undue importance when the substance is not clearly discerned. The same tendency was found among the Jews, and the Prophets were sent to raise the thoughts of the people to the contemplation of essential realities; and to make them understand the subordinate design of the ceremonial law.

I have no doubt that pious and intelligent men,

gifted with a large measure of the imaginative faculty, and an inverse proportion of good sense, may honestly find many ingenious and plausible arguments in favour of High Church doctrines and ritualistic practices. As far as I am acquainted with the arguments brought forward, they are not so much based on Scriptural declarations as upon tradition. They appeal to the strong tendency of human nature to trust in whatever is visible, outward, and material, rather than to seek for spiritual knowledge and experience. The Society of Friends have, as it seems to me, erred in the opposite extreme, and have too much undervalued external forms and ceremonies. Yet it is striking and instructive to see how much an intelligent man can say on behalf of their views and practices. Mr. Joseph John Gurney, in his work on the subject, has given very sensible and plausible reasons for the 'disuse of all typical rites in the worship of God.' He says that Baptism and the Lord's Supper 'are types and shadows, representing, in a figurative manner, certain great particulars of Christian truth. It is clear, therefore, that the *principle* on which these practices are founded, appertains to the Old Covenant, and equally plain (in the opinion of Friends) that such practices do not consist with that spiritual worship which is described as so distinguishing a feature of the dispensation of the Gospel.' He endeavours to show, by numerous declarations of Scripture, and other considerations, that all shadows and types were

abolished by the Christian dispensation. He gives reasons for regarding Baptism and the Lord's Supper as modifications of Jewish practices, not designed for permanent observance, although temporarily used in the infancy of the Church. I believe that the extreme views of the Quakers are erroneous; and that their mode of conducting worship could only be suited to experienced Christians of mature age, who had attained to a high degree of spirituality. Yet, even in their errors, they are striving after the substance, although too much undervaluing the legitimate use of those external aids to the spirit, which are useful and beneficial, while it resides in the body. It seems to me, however, that I would rather side with them than participate in sentiments which have the fatal tendency of encouraging the human mind (naturally too much inclined in that direction) to find support, repose, and fancied security in types, symbols, and mystic ordinances, instead of earnestly striving after substantial realities, which alone can elevate the intellect and purify the heart.

I believe, however, that a large proportion of those who have favoured ritualistic practices have not been prompted by a wish to encourage ecclesiastical pretensions, or to promote the revival of a strong sacerdotal system. Some have been influenced by a love of gaudy accessories, or have been soothed and gratified by having their senses charmed; while, as they fondly believed, the spirit was also benefited. Others have been captivated

by the greater appearance of earnestness and order in the ritualistic forms, as compared with the careless and uncouth proceedings too often witnessed in churches professedly evangelical. Many good men allow themselves to slip into a very monotonous and lifeless manner of reading the Liturgy and the Scriptural Lessons, and give very little attention to modulation and expression of voice. This may be partly ascribed to the difficulty of constantly repeating the same words, and going through the same invariable forms, without losing, in a great measure, an impressive sense of their meaning. But neither intonation, nor any other infusion of the dramatical, can really diminish this incurable defect of a Liturgy, however excellent it may be in its comprehensive phraseology. Milton, in his 'Eikonoklastes,' objects to a liturgy as restraining the Divine gift of prayer which is promised to Christians. This seems to me a serious objection, as the gift of prayer is intellectual as well as spiritual, and can be but little cultivated if only written prayers are used. But, then, experience shows, that when a liturgy is discarded, the unpremeditated prayers which are offered are too often marked by carelessness, tautology, tedious sameness, and even irreverent forms of expression, which do not indicate an earnest cultivation of the gift of prayer. I suppose, as human nature is constituted, set forms of prayer, or a liturgy in which the whole assembly can take audible part, may be used with benefit. But there should also be

prayers, flowing from the mind and heart of the living exponent of the thoughts and feelings of the congregation, and adapted to the changing circumstances of the times. Why should the Christian Church be deprived of intellectual gifts of prayer, bestowed from age to age, on those who are qualified for the ministerial office? Does not experience abundantly prove, that a liturgy alone is not sufficient to move the mind and heart of assembled multitudes?

I have endeavoured to make a partial application of the practical tests to which I have alluded; and, according to my ideas, the result is unfavourable to the theological systems held among us. When I examine whether they are so constructed as to bring into harmony the various declarations of the Bible, the impression I derive is equally unsatisfactory. The harsh and cruel aspect they give to the Divine administration is founded upon one class of texts, and substantially disregards numerous passages of the widest and most important significance, whereby the meaning which the former would have if standing alone is strikingly modified. I have already slightly referred to this inconsistent mode of dealing with the contents of the Sacred Volume, and propose to enter more fully into the subject at a later period. In support of what I have asserted respecting the conduct of theologians, I will quote a remark made in the work of Conybeare and Howson, on the Life and Epistles of St. Paul. It is in a note on Col. i. 20, representing the future

reconciliation of all things to God through Christ, and is as follows: 'This statement of the infinite extent of the results of Christ's redemption (which may well fill us with reverential awe) has been a sore stumbling-block to many commentators, who have devised various (and some very ingenious) modes of explaining it away.' I contend that those who profess to expound the Holy Scriptures have no right to explain away any passages, and to deprive them of the meaning which their form and wording naturally convey to the understanding. It was not obligatory on theologians to attempt the construction of a system of the universe, or to pretend to unfold the Divine purposes concerning the destinies of the human race. There is doubtless an irrepressible and salutary tendency in earnest and intelligent minds to think deeply and frequently on a subject so intimately connected with the dearest interests of Humanity, and to seek all possible information concerning it. But it was unwarrantable for any man, or for any Church, to enforce a set of dogmas on topics so mysterious. The minds of Christians ought to have been left free and unfettered, to interpret the declarations of the Bible respecting the solemn transactions of eternity, to the best of their judgment. If ever a subject required to be maintained as an open question, it was one on which the declarations of Scripture did not appear harmonious. It was the clear duty of intelligent Christians to recognise, in an equal and impartial manner, the authority of the

seemingly conflicting classes of texts to which I have adverted. If unable to show their agreement, they should have confessed the fact; instead of assigning to one class the utmost force and intensity of meaning, and denuding the other classes of the significance which their structure and phraseology plainly exhibit. By so acting, commentators have been guilty, in effect, of adding to the Word of God, and of taking away therefrom; and the consequences have been extremely detrimental to the intellectual growth and moral discipline of the human race.

It may be said, however, that it is not necessary for men to bewilder their minds with intricate and mysterious questions. Many well-meaning persons may consider it far better to take a lesson on that point from the counsels of Positivism. The apostles of that system tell us that, as men of sense, we ought to confine our attention exclusively to visible and tangible objects pertaining to this life, and to banish metaphysics and theology altogether from our thoughts. If that advice could be generally followed, a great degradation of Humanity would inevitably ensue. But the human spirit resists the imposition of such bonds and fetters, and yet is prompted by indolence and love of ease to make a compromise with those recommendations. Multitudes, who are weary of discussions on perplexing topics, seek a haven of rest in practical views. They trust in God and rely on His mercy through the Saviour. They

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pray to Him privately and in their families, and are scrupulous in their attendance upon public worship. They read the Bible, but do not earnestly endeavour to understand its various doctrinal statements, many of which make no distinct or sensible impression on their intellect. They, in short, introduce a modified Positivism into their religious sentiments and intellectual habits, and perhaps regard their mental attitude concerning dogmatical questions with much self-complacency, as indicative of practical good sense. I beg to submit that such a procedure was never judicious and beneficial in any age, and is particularly unsuited to our own. As surely as Positivism leads to Materialism, and Materialism to Atheism, so certain is it, likewise, that the man who does not vigorously apply his mental powers to the comprehension of the Bible will be unable, at this period of intellectual agitation, to retain strong convictions and earnest moral feelings. The Sacred Volume was given to men that they might study it diligently, and might make progress in a knowledge of the great truths which it unfolds. We must strive to understand what is meant by election, which is so prominently brought forward in the New Testament. We cannot, without incurring the risk of mental feebleness and disorganisation, pass over that and other important doctrines, under the plea that they are inscrutable. We must earnestly seek for truth, as for hid treasure, in regard to the character and purposes of God and our relations to Him. Errors on such points



have a most pernicious influence on our mental and moral nature, and can only be combated by earnest and unwearied efforts, which are incompatible with intellectual sloth, indifference, and inaction. There is a responsibility pressing heavily on all intelligent Christians, who cannot liberate themselves from it by blindly following commentators and expounders, as if the Creator had not endowed them with individual capacities to search the Scriptures for themselves. If the Bereans\* were commended for testing the declarations of the Apostles by a careful reference to the Old Testament writings, although the Apostles displayed miraculous credentials of Divine authority, it surely is still more incumbent on us to bring all theological systems to the test of the full and complete disclosures of revelation which we possess. There is no salutary repose for the human mind except in so far as it lays hold of great truths in a consistent and harmonious manner. Even practical views, as they are called, slip away from the grasp of the intellect, if not united with strong convictions, founded upon enlightened conceptions of our relations to God and to each other. Such convictions can only be maintained in efficient force by mental energy and continued effort, and if they have been weakened in this age the culpability rests upon religious communities, as they, although possessing greater advantages than their predecessors, have not diligently used them for

\* Acts xvii. 10, 11.

the acquisition of increasing light and knowledge in regard to the most important objects of human investigation; but have sought an insidious and tempting repose upon the assumed basis of a delusive finality which has no existence on earth. Our convictions ought to be far more vivid and impressive than those of bygone epochs, as we have unrestricted facilities for the study of the Sacred Volume, and the means of obtaining far more complete and extended information concerning the Books of Nature and Providence than were placed within the reach of our forefathers.

Before closing this chapter, I propose to offer some further criticisms on the two leading schemes of doctrine held by Christians, in so far as relates to the representations given by both, respecting the extent of the Gospel remedy for sin and misery. I believe the statements they make on that point are not in accordance with the declarations of the Bible, and therefore shall not hesitate to criticise them with the utmost freedom. If I sincerely believed that the Creator had made known His intention to favour some of His intelligent creatures and to abandon the rest to endless depravity and hopeless misery, I should consider it foolish and unreasonable to murmur. It would be folly, as it would merit the rebuke of the Prophet, enforced by the Apostle, 'Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker . . . . Shall the clay say unto him that fashioneth it, what makest thou?' (Isa. xlv. 9; Rom. ix. 20.) It would be

unreasonable, because, whether we accept the Bible as a revelation from God, or judge of Him simply by the works of Creation, we have abundant proofs of His wisdom and benevolence. We see those qualities inscribed in every page of the book of nature, and we see them shining with transcendent lustre in the disclosures of revelation. When we behold the constitution of the earth, its bounteous and diversified supplies, and its adaptation to the comfort and welfare of mankind, we may perceive clearly that nothing prevents the children of men from being happy in this life except their own follies and misdoings. So, in like manner, when we contemplate the marvellous love displayed in the sufferings and death of the Son of God, and the manifestation of tender concern for humanity which the Gospel breathes ; and when we know, by observation and experience, that no one who earnestly seeks God, fails to obtain intellectual and spiritual benefits of the most important nature, we ought to be convinced that God is kind and good, as well as wise. If, therefore, we should find it explicitly declared, in a volume which bears unequivocal credentials of Divine authority, and which exhibits such wonderful proofs of love and self-sacrifice, that a large portion of intelligent creatures will remain for ever in a state of darkness, depravity, and misery, we ought not, as reasonable beings, to think harshly of God on that account. We ought, on the one hand, to be impressed by the innumerable and undoubted proofs of the Divine goodness

and wisdom, which present themselves to us on every side ; and we ought to bear in mind, on the other, that our knowledge is very restricted and imperfect, and that we are not in a position to judge of the operation of great principles, in their application to the varied and complex interests of the universe. These considerations ought to inspire confidence in the wisdom, rectitude, and benevolence of God, even in the midst of the darkness and gloom—the disorder and confusion—the past, present, and prospective misery—which environ and menace the intellectual and moral condition of Humanity. Such has always appeared to me a reasonable view of those great questions, and the spirit and temper with which intelligent minds ought to contemplate the mysterious problems of the universe.

But if a man becomes convinced that the Bible, instead of revealing a restricted plan of benevolence, or a system of partiality and favouritism, really discloses the unwearied action and the most self-denying efforts of the Creator to work out the permanent welfare and happiness of all His intelligent creatures, a wonderful modification takes place in all his sentiments and feelings. ‘A horror of great darkness’ is removed from his mind, and the aspect of the universe becomes altogether changed, both as regards the attitude of the Creator and the relations of intelligent creatures to each other. He gradually discerns the meaning of many scriptural declarations, which were before unintelligible, and begins to

perceive, with more clearness than heretofore, the harmony of attestation to great truths which is given by the Books of Nature, Providence, and Revelation. If he sincerely believes that there is a bewildering mixture of noxious errors and salutary truths in the theological systems held by Christians, and that serious injuries are inflicted on the intellectual perceptions and moral qualities of mankind, by the confused and perplexing notions which prevail, he cannot avoid cherishing a strong desire that error and darkness may be dissipated and removed. If none of the writers of the day bring forward such views as he believes to be true and correct, he may be irresistibly impelled to make the effort, even though painfully conscious of very inadequate capacity, and of the immense difficulties which oppose the hope of success. If he has an earnest conviction that the dogmas taught by religious instructors calumniate the great Sovereign of the universe, and misrepresent His wisdom and goodness, they must naturally excite indignation, and an irrepressible wish to expose their perversions and inconsistencies. The experience of our age has shown abundantly, that opinions and practices may be very fallacious and deleterious, although sanctioned by the consent and approbation of ages. He will, therefore, not be deterred from treating existing creeds, catechisms, and dogmatical assertions, as the productions of fallible men, by any claims advanced of ancient authority, and the acquiescence of a long succession of intelligent and pious minds.

When I contemplate the Calvinistic system of theology, I find many valuable truths, clearly and forcibly stated, in a manner which appears to be in accordance with the declarations of the Sacred Volume. But their real significance and beauty are disfigured and obscured by the overshadowing predominance of erroneous conceptions respecting other Scriptural truths of the most momentous character. Methinks an imposing structure arises to view, of sombre architecture and gloomy shape, with rigid outlines, and an air of ponderous solidity. It seems more adapted for a prison than a palace, although the eye discerns incongruous attempts to introduce some ornaments, which impair its harsh symmetry, but add no softness of colour, and scarcely mitigate the frowning terrors of its form. It may be deemed a fitting temple of the Sovereign Ruler by those who have listened with awe to the thunders of Sinai, but have remained unaffected by the milder radiance which emanates from the Mosaic dispensation. Its cold aspect and stern features must repel a mind that has questioned the heavens and the earth respecting their great Creator. Those cruel, pitiless dogmas do not harmonise with the warm sunshine, the gaiety of verdure, the smiling loveliness of flowers, the singing of birds, the winning charms and melodies of Nature. They should be pondered over amid the exceptional ruggedness of bleak and sterile mountains, or a dreary cavern in icy regions might be a spot still more congenial. Their incongruity is sensibly felt, while the benign-

nant accents of the Gospel breathe unmeasured kindness and benevolence, with a tender solicitude for the welfare of the whole family of man. The frightful tenets of Calvinism exhibit the Creator as being guided by no intelligible principles of justice, mercy, or goodness. He is represented as placing all things and all creatures in the iron grasp of a relentless fatality, which, although impelling and coercing with resistless force, leads not its hapless victims into paths of safety, peace, and happiness. The weary catalogue of sufferings, crimes, and disorders which are witnessed under its sway, having been clearly foreseen, an elaborate series of measures are stated to have been devised, having in view only a partial correction of accumulated ills. Those measures are described as being so vast and comprehensive as to possess resources of unlimited efficiency, both in their intrinsic adaptation and the mighty energy of the Agent who applies them. They manifest proofs of Divine love and self-denial calculated to melt the most obdurate, and to elicit responsive warmth from the coldest natures. But the gloomy voice of Calvinism chills their softening influence on the rebellious heart, by the stern announcement, that this wondrous love, although it appears free and unfettered as the air of heaven, will be measured out only to a few. It is depicted with bewildering features of immensity and smallness—as an ocean of waters concentrating its mighty resources to irrigate a small patch in the wilderness, and leaving vast tracts of withered sterility

unblest even by drops of fertilising moisture. The hallowed streams must be conveyed to the favoured few by a mode rigidly appropriate to the iron *régime* of necessity, which is described as operating throughout all time and throughout eternity. The chosen few must be compelled to accept salvation by strong moral constraint, exercised on their spirits, through Divine agency of a special nature ; and we are taught to believe that their everlasting safety will be secured by a continuance of such moral and spiritual restraint. Without its coercing influence they must have shared in the general ruin, as in their natural condition they are neither better nor worse than the rest of mankind ; and by coercion and restraint alone can their erratic tendencies be repressed, throughout the endless course of an immortal existence. If we enquire, why this strong moral constraint was not exerted upon the infancy of intelligent natures as a preventive, instead of being tardily employed as a partial corrective of accumulated misery and depravity, no answer is given by Calvinism. It cannot tell us why, if a *régime* of necessity must always continue, it should not have operated, from the beginning, with benign efficacy upon fresh and untainted natures, issuing pure and uncontaminated from the hands of the Creator. If we ask why the love of the Creator should be confined to a small portion of His sinful creatures, who are equally guilty with the rest, and why the elaborate scheme for their recovery, with its illimitable resources, is



not applied for the benefit of the whole, no explanation is afforded.

To my mind, the Calvinistic system calumniates both the wisdom and goodness of the Creator, by monstrous perversions of the most kindly and benevolent intimations. It converts the Gospel itself, although clearly proclaimed to be 'good tidings of great joy to all people,' into an inexorable announcement of restricted favouritism, which abandons almost all the human race to endless and hopeless depravity and woe. The God of Calvinism is not the wise, firm, and gracious benefactor, whose character and purposes are unfolded by the full and complete disclosures of the Bible. He is presented to us as a Being of stern and arbitrary resolves, who places ignorant and weak creatures in a maze of perplexing circumstances, with no apparent objects of utility, either to themselves or to the general welfare of the universe. The partial tenderness of the Being depicted by Calvinism, with its costly apparatus of boundless capabilities and confined application, is as incomprehensible as the withering wrath which overwhelms even the unconsciousness of infancy with indiscriminating severity. We are called upon to believe that the Supreme Ruler seeks rather for plausible grounds to inflict unmitigated ruin, than as being prompted by enlarged benevolence to guide ignorance, weakness, and perversity into a gradual development of salutary knowledge and moral strength. The admirers of Calvinism extol its impressive exhibition of the Divine sovereignty,

as a distinguishing feature of the system ; and I would humbly join in offering this well-merited eulogium. That great and important truth is conveyed far more clearly and forcibly by the bold reasonings and deductions of Calvinism than by the feeble enunciations of Arminianism. It sets forth, in vivid colours, the all-prevailing energy of the Creator, and the omnipotent sway of His will, as being not only paramount to restrain, and even to crush, all other demonstrations of strength, but as being the only power that exists, and the source from which all the forces of the universe derive their origin and their continued vitality. Such declarations are in harmony with the uniform testimony of the Sacred Volume, as we find this important truth clearly exhibited in the Old Testament, and luminously confirmed in the New. The Apostle Paul speaks of the Creator as ‘the blessed and only Potentate ;’\* and of all thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, as having been created by Him, and as being sustained by Him.† Yet it appears very difficult for the human mind to lay hold of this exalted doctrine. We seek it in vain amid the vague and misty conceptions of Pantheism ; and, as far as I understand the disquisitions of philosophers, ancient and modern, they seldom manifest a clear discernment of its grandeur. The mythological systems which Humanity has devised, whether clothed with poetic beauty, or disfigured by ferocious and barbarous notions,

\* 1 Tim. vi. 15.

† Col. i. 16, 17.

seem generally to recognise the action of various supernatural powers, with conflicting tendencies—and sometimes the all-controlling restraint of a blind fatality. Even a large proportion of Christian writers express themselves as if their views concerning the sovereignty of God were faint and confused. Many of them convey the idea (at least to my mind) that they regard the intentions of the Creator towards all men as being of the most benevolent nature, but thwarted by insurmountable obstacles. The colossal form of the spirit of evil is at times presented to us by theologians, as almost wearing the aspect of an independent and even of a rival power. Calvinism does not fall into this noxious error, but clearly asserts the absolute supremacy and the uncontrolled sovereignty of the Creator. But its vindication of this fundamental truth loses much of its beneficial tendency, owing to its injurious treatment of other truths. The homage which the God of the Bible seeks from His intelligent creatures, is not the terror inspired by a perception of His resistless power. An impressive conviction of His sovereign rule, as the Creator and Upholder of all things, is doubtless indispensable as a basis for all right conceptions and emotions. It is, however, equally important for intelligent beings to maintain clear and earnest convictions respecting the exalted attributes of wisdom, equity, and benevolence. The mighty Sovereign of the universe claims their recognition of His wisdom as displayed in the works of Creation, and in the elevated and enlightened principles of government

which He has established. He also deigns to solicit their warm and tender affection, on the plea of His unnumbered bounties, His sleepless watchfulness and care, and more especially on the ground of His wondrous love and self-sacrifice, as manifested in the scheme of redemption. Can it be said that the delineation given by Calvinism of the Divine character and purposes is calculated to win the confidence and love of Humanity? When we read its lengthened disquisitions and bold assertions, do our hearts glow with admiration, and melt with soft emotions of tenderness towards the great Author of our existence? I would repeat my unhesitating conviction, that the system of the universe which it unfolds is inconsistent with the intimations given by the works of Creation, and is a hideous perversion of the Gospel scheme of elevated intelligence and comprehensive benevolence. It neither displays the wisdom, equity, nor goodness of the Creator. I venture to assert, that no system of dogmas can be correct which veils and obscures any of the essential attributes of the Deity. Calvinism does more than this. It represents the Creator as acting in a manner which appears absolutely inconsistent with the glorious qualities I have named. The deliberate plans and designs which it ascribes to the Supreme Intelligence, involving the immortal destinies of untold myriads, are exhibited as failures, in so far as they can be comprehended by any human mind. Confusion, disorder, and misery attend their action from the beginning;

and Calvinism professes to unfold the ultimate consequences of hopeless ruin to which they lead. It then applies itself to systematise a counter-acting series of measures, with boundless remedial capabilities, the operation of which, instead of being co-extensive with the wide-spreading intensity of the evil, is represented to be restricted and confined. The final result, as depicted by Calvinism, is an endless, unalterable perpetuity throughout the universe (or among the orders of intelligent beings of which we have cognisance) of the most glaring contrasts of light and darkness, happiness and misery, love and malignity, holiness and depravity. Calvinism places this frightful picture before us, and, at the same time, calls upon us to recognise the sovereignty of the Creator, as possessing unlimited power and resistless energy of rule over all things and all creatures. The Manichæans believed in the conflicting action of the god of light and the god of darkness; but they taught that the god of light always strives to deliver souls from darkness. Calvinism tells us that the God of Light possesses absolute supremacy, and yet will perpetuate the sway of darkness throughout eternity. It seems to me that such representations cannot impress any intelligent mind with an earnest conviction of the Divine wisdom, equity, and goodness; and the emphatic assertion of God's sovereignty, in connection with such statements, may awaken and deepen emotions of awe and terror, but is not calculated to inspire veneration, confidence, and

love. I repeat, without hesitation, that any scheme of dogmas which does not illustrate the wisdom, equity, and goodness of God, cannot really be in harmony with the declarations of the Bible.

The statements of Arminianism produce impressions of a different nature in regard to the Divine character. It teaches us that the Creator is prompted by feelings of benevolence and goodness towards all the race of Adam, both with respect to the present life and that which is to come. Its account of the Fall is as puerile, confused, and unintelligible as that of Calvinism; but it professes the undoubting belief, that Christ died for all mankind, and that the invitations of the Gospel are addressed to every member of the human family. I suppose the Wesleyan Methodists are the most important of the modern representatives of Arminianism. John Wesley, in his tract on Predestination, employs very earnest efforts to show the error of the Calvinistic doctrine, that the Saviour died for the elect alone; and, as far as I can discover, the Wesleyans of the present day profess to adhere to his opinions in general. There is one striking difference between the systems of Calvin and Arminius. The former asserts that all those for whom Christ died will be saved, and represents the wisdom and power of God as carrying out His gracious intentions concerning them to a complete and happy success. The doctrine of final perseverance is stated to embrace all the elect in its potent energy; and the sovereignty of God is vindicated, in its sway over human hearts,

as well as its resistless control over all contingencies and circumstances. In that respect the teachings of Calvinism are logical and consistent. But Arminianism does not exhibit the sovereignty of God in the same clear and emphatic way. It shows triumphantly, from numerous passages of Scripture, that Christ died for all; and yet represents the results to be as disastrous as if He had died only for a small part of mankind. Its efforts to explain the frustration of the Divine benevolence appear to me feeble and unsatisfactory. As far as I can understand the statements of the Wesleyans, they attribute the failure to the adverse operation of free will, which, according to them, only produces beneficial results on a fraction of the human race. They say that, through the disobedience of the first Adam, all men were plunged into a state of darkness, depravity, and misery; but that, through the sufferings and merits of the Second Adam, all men may become more happy on earth, and may obtain a greater degree of happiness in heaven, than would have been possessed by them if sin had not entered into the world. Yet they admit that very few men are saved from endless depravity and anguish. The Calvinists assert that the human spirit cannot entertain a thought or emotion, diminishing its enmity to God, except by the influence of Divine grace, which is not offered to all, but is exercised only on the elect; being conferred on them by a species of compulsion or moral constraint, without being sought by them originally, any more than by others. The Wesleyans

maintain, on the other hand, that, by the merits and mediation of Christ, the faculty of choice has been restored to all mankind in a certain degree. They teach that the action of Divine grace does not commence upon any until, by their natural capacities, they feel a sense of their sin and misery. The Creator is represented as being ready and willing to bestow the free gift of faith, and the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit, upon all who, through their natural thoughts and emotions, entertain a sense of need and helplessness. The Calvinists magnify the Divine sovereignty, in saving the elect, in spite of their natural unwillingness and depravity, and reduce the action of free will to a nullity, or very nearly so. The Arminians magnify the Divine benevolence, as theoretically embracing all men ; but represent its effective operation as benefiting only a few. The Calvinists have rigid and strongly-defined views on election ; the ideas of Arminians on election are so vague that they seldom bring them forward ; and I find no mention of this important doctrine in the catechisms published by order of the Wesleyan Conference. The Calvinists maintain that the elect are those who, by the deliberate purpose of God, were chosen by Him, long before their existence, to be the recipients of Divine grace. The Arminians reject that dogma, and regard election as arising from the foreknowledge of God, that certain persons of the human family would, by the exercise of free will, turn to Him for succour, and would in consequence become the recipients of



Divine grace. According to the Arminian views, the word 'election' would hardly be appropriate; and they ought either to show that the translation of the phraseology employed by the Apostles is inaccurate, or else they ought to modify the opinions which they authoritatively inculcate on this important doctrine. Nevertheless, I believe that Arminianism, with all its defects, exhibits far more of the benign spirit of Christianity than Calvinism; and it is on this account, I think, that a large measure of success has attended the labours of the Wesleyan Methodists.

It seems to me that we may arrive at an approximation to the truth, as it is presented to us in the Holy Scriptures, by accepting some of the leading doctrines of Calvinism and Arminianism, either in a complete or modified form. I allude to those which relate to the scope, design, and extent of the Gospel remedy for sin and misery. We ought to regard the sovereignty of God as absolute, over all the realms of mind and matter, which owe their origin to Him, and could not exist a moment without His sustaining energy. We ought to regard the benevolence of God as universal, not only in a theoretical sense, but in its definite purposes and practical aims. We must maintain with the Arminians, that Christ died for all mankind; and we must hold with the Calvinists, that all those for whom He died will be saved, in spite of their unwillingness, perversity, and depravity, as the sovereign rule of God will overcome all obstacles, and completely accomplish His gracious designs.

We must, with the Arminians, discern the movements of free will in man ; but ought to view it as putting forth only incipient and tentative efforts, clouded by ignorance and error, and swayed towards good and evil by varied and conflicting influences, whereby its salutary and well-regulated functions will gradually be developed through a long course of painful discipline. We see its perverse action upon individuals, pregnant with momentous consequences of misery and degradation in this life, and intensifying the awful terrors of eternity. Yet we must not suppose that the Creator has entrusted their reversible destinies of His immortal creatures to the erratic, blind, and impetuous action of free will, but holds them under His own wise and firm guidance. We must recognise the great doctrine of Election, with the strongly-defined features depicted by Calvinism, but ought to emancipate ourselves from the narrow and confined notions which it inculcates. That important measure must be viewed as harmonising with the elevated designs of the Creator for the permanent welfare of all His creatures, of which intimations are distinctly given in the Sacred Volume. We perceive that, in the preliminary stage of the Mediatorial dispensation, which is in some degree open to our observation, the principle of election is applied in a partial and restricted manner, taking the firstfruits of God's creatures (James i. 18). Its application in that way appears harsh ; but is an indispensable part of the comprehensive measures for the good of all, the glorious

consummation of which is, I think, distinctly indicated in the Bible, though apparently in a future so remote that the utmost flights of fancy are incompetent to traverse the immeasurable distance. If the organisation of matter has been conducted by processes so slow that the efforts of human research are incapable of tracing the antecedent ages of development, I find no difficulty in supposing that our imperfect faculties are still less qualified to measure the progressive stages of gradual development, required for the organisation of the intellectual and moral qualities of intelligent beings, destined for an endless existence, so as to build up the complete cosmos of physical, mental, and spiritual glory. I believe that a careful study of the Scriptures, together with an enlightened appreciation of the lessons afforded by the Books of Nature and Providence, may elicit harmonious beams of light, to illuminate the dark enigmas which seem to baffle our investigation. We may be enabled to perceive that moral evil, although intensely noxious, and incurably disastrous in its own essence and properties, has been permitted by the Creator for enlightened and beneficent purposes, and is being converted, by His wisdom and energy, into an important auxiliary, in counteracting and overcoming great and almost invincible difficulties. Those difficulties are inseparably connected with the necessary relations between the Creator and His creatures; and the disorder, confusion, darkness, and misery which are seen in the universe are occasioned by the

absolute necessity of exposure to contingencies and dangers which the exigencies of the situation demand. I draw strong inferences from the declarations of the Sacred Volume, and reflections on the human organisation, that the dignity and happiness of intelligent creatures, destined for immortality, require the development in them of distinct personality, inviolable self-consciousness, and a vital spontaneity of movement, without which, indeed, there would not be a reality of individual existence. Yet, to effect this, is extremely difficult, and even apparently impossible, as they are so closely connected with, and so absolutely dependent on the Creator, that they live, and move, and have their being in Him. Locke was unable to see how the difficulty could be solved, and arrived at this short conclusion: 'that if it be possible for God to make a free agent, then man is free, though I see not the way of it.' The vast processes we behold in operation, attended with so much disorder and confusion, are for the purpose of accomplishing those indispensable objects, as I think we may surmise from the intimations of the Bible. We may visibly discern and consciously feel, that impressive knowledge and experience are being instilled into those who enter upon existence completely destitute of both; that antagonism and conflict are strengthening the sense of individuality; and that the struggle with various propelling and restraining influences, in the thoughts, emotions, and outward circumstances, is bringing into action the initiatory movements of free will.

It is difficult for us, in whose minds the sense of security has always been associated with an apparatus of physical force, even so much as to admit the idea, that order can ever be maintained in the universe without the necessity of stern repression, and without what some persons regard as wholesome terror, inspired by spectacles of suffering and agony. Many good people seem to hold as an axiom, that a denial of eternal punishments is equivalent to an assertion that anarchy and confusion will triumph with unbridled fury, and that the sceptre of supreme dominion and control will not be held firmly in the grasp of Omnipotence. We cannot easily realise the thought, that the luminous rays of wisdom and intelligence, and the wondrous energy of purity and love which will be poured forth with constant and ever-increasing plenitude from the great Source of all that is excellent, can ever fully dissipate darkness and error, and remove the fearful mass of selfishness, corruption, and malignity which afflicts the intellectual and moral department of the universe. Besides, a large proportion of the Christian world would consider it as almost impious to question the opinions of the early Fathers on such points; whose authority (although no claims to inspiration are made on their behalf) is regarded as paramount over all succeeding efforts of the human intellect. I would submit with humility, that the opinions of the first Christians are not clearly known; that some of the most eminent of the Fathers rejected the

doctrine of endless depravity and misery; and that intelligent Christians of our age are better qualified to understand the Scriptures than converts from heathenism. It is, I believe, an undoubted fact, that we have no reliable information as to the views put forth by the Apostles themselves, either as guided by inspiration, or as exercising independent thought, except what is furnished in their well-authenticated writings. Nor do we possess certain knowledge of the sentiments entertained by those who had the advantage of personal intercourse with them, except what we may gather from the New Testament, and some other very imperfect records. An impenetrable wall of obscurity separates us from the Apostolic age, when we seek light from any other source than the sacred books. Even if we could obtain a clear view of the false notions which mingled with genuine piety in those days, it would avail us nothing. We see that the immediate presence and personal efforts of the Apostles could scarcely repress the subtle contamination of doctrine, and the insidious mixture of noxious error with salutary truth. Sufficient proofs are afforded in the vehement remonstrances of the Apostles, and the solemn reprehensions in the Book of Revelations,\* that the earliest Christians were not qualified to act as guides to future ages. It is supposed that one of the objects contemplated by St. John in his writings, was to oppose the spirit of Oriental-

\* Rev. ii. iii.

ism and Platonism, which was already destroying the simplicity of the Gospel; and to counteract the subtle interpretations of the Gnostics, which were converting its most impressive facts into shadowy allegories. Besides which he had apparently, during his life, to oppose ideas akin to those of Antinomianism, and a vast variety of other noxious tendencies. It seems evident, I think, that the Apostles had to combat fallacies of thought and feeling which manifest themselves in every age, and are reproduced in our own, with a modification of external form, owing to differing circumstances, but essentially the same in their intrinsic qualities and misleading influences. The earliest Christians were either converts from the darkness and corruption of Heathenism, or from the narrow and restricted ideas of Judaism, and it was almost impossible for them to acquire clear, comprehensive, and enlightened views of Christian doctrines, in their mutual and well-adjusted relations, as forming a grand and harmonious whole. At first, heathen converts would have their thoughts and feelings absorbed by the striking, and to them entirely new, revelations of the unity of the Godhead—the impressive reality of a future life—the brotherhood of nations—and the undreamt-of, unimagined proclamation of Divine mercy and eternal salvation to all mankind, through the sufferings and death of the Son of God. In times of sore trial and distress, controvertible topics would seldom be discussed by those who had constant need of consolation, support, and mutual

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sympathy. When Christians were freed from the persecutions of Heathenism, their differing views became more manifest. Some were influenced by Judaistic notions; others by Platonism, which presented many noble thoughts to its disciples, but did not disclose the God of the Bible. Parsism, or the doctrine of Zoroaster, had a large share of influence over cultivated minds; and the dualistic principle of conflicting powers of good and evil seems (as Neander remarks) to have been particularly adapted to the currents of thought then prevalent. Brahmanism and Buddhism were also evidently known in the Roman Empire; and 'the longing of the soul for release from the bonds of matter' produced ascetical practices not sanctioned by the Apostles. Those diversified ideas and doctrines gave a colouring to the interpretation of Scripture by eminent minds; and they mingled them in various proportions, and with endless modifications, in their attempts to construct any system of dogmas. Humanly speaking, it was impossible for any of them to receive the statements of Scripture with the unbiassed simplicity of a child, and without the interference of preconceived notions of an erratic nature. These facts and considerations strengthen my conviction, that we must obtain our religious opinions from the Scriptures, and from them alone; and that we are as much, and I think more, qualified to understand them in their comprehensive and harmonious signification than the primitive Christians. It seems to me, that the important mission entrusted



to them was not to explain the inspired writings, for which they were not fitted, but to bear testimony to their validity, and to manifest, even at the cost of life, an ineradicable conviction that the Sacred Books were invested with Divine authority. In that respect they rendered invaluable services to succeeding ages, as is forcibly shown in the 'Bampton Lectures' for 1867, by the Rev. E. Garbett. This testimony was borne in the midst of cruel persecutions, as well as beneath the smile of imperial patronage. It was given by converts to Christianity of all classes and ranks, who were originally imbued with diversified sentiments in regard to philosophy and religion, implanted under the teachings of Paganism. The inspired canon was defined, and the sacred text was investigated and recognised in times of sorrow and trial, whereby the bewildering influence of false professors was diminished, if not altogether withdrawn. We have a clear chain of evidence to the validity and integrity of the Apostolic writings, from the earliest ages, even through the period of mediæval darkness. We may, I think, justly regard the primitive Christians, among whom were representatives of almost every phase of humanity, as peculiarly qualified, by the diversity of their mental tendencies, and the circumstances in which they were situated, to bear an overwhelming amount of testimony on the points named; but not to instruct us in the comprehension of the elevated truths which the Scriptures unfold. If an erudite Chinese or Brahmin were

to embrace Christianity, and we believed him to be a pious, intelligent, and earnest-minded man, we should not suppose that he would be better able to understand the Bible than a man of equal capacity and piety who had been brought up in a Christian community; although we might find it both interesting and instructive to ascertain his impressions of the sublime doctrines made known in the Sacred Volume. Why, then, should we regard as paramount authorities the views of Grecians, Romans, and others, who were born in the midst of heathen notions and practices, and unavoidably subject to their misleading influences, even though they may have had some uncertain traditions of the sayings and doings of the Apostles beyond those recorded in the sacred books? What rational grounds are there for the supposition that men who had just emerged from a chaos of mental perversity and moral corruption, would be gifted with an exceptional capacity to comprehend, in their glorious fulness, the vast and elevated purposes of Divine wisdom and goodness, for the permanent welfare of the universe? Restricted privileges—exaggerated notions of relative superiority in the select few over the multitude—the demoralising influence of slavery, with its untold cruelties and impurities—and the general disregard of human suffering, unless when viewed by the eye of friendship and affection,—all the habits of thought and feeling would render the best men of those and many succeeding ages extremely unqualified even so much as to imagine

a scheme of universal benevolence. It seems to me that the human mind is constantly liable, either to undue veneration of supposed authorities, or to the other extreme of contempt for authority, joined to arrogant self-reliance. We find it difficult to maintain the safe and salutary course of listening, with respectful but discriminating attention, to the opinions of all those who appear to be endowed with an intelligent and serious mind — whether they lived in bygone ages, or claim our regard by their personal ministrations, as our religious teachers in our own time. It is also hard to persevere in a steady determination never to abandon the right, and the imperative duty, of searching the Scriptures for ourselves, and of testing all religious dogmas by a careful reference to the only real and unerring standard of spiritual truth.

We are likewise apt to forget that, although we may and ought to make progress in harmonious and comprehensive perceptions of the sublime verities of Christianity, yet that we are not warranted in arrogating the principle of finality for our theological systems. I believe that, although it is given to some races of mankind to confer great benefits on their fellow-men, by bringing the words of revelation before their notice, and by exhibiting the benignant influence of Christianity on social and domestic happiness, yet that no branch of the human family will ever be qualified to act as authoritative instructors. The great advantage which the Jews possessed of old

was, that 'unto them were committed the oracles of God' (Rom. iii. 2). Still the most pious among them, although they 'obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect' (Heb. xi. 39, 40). In the mysterious providence of God, when 'blindness in part happened to Israel' (Rom. xi. 25), light sprang up among the Gentiles. St. Paul, while dwelling on this solemn fact, exclaims, 'If the fall of them be the riches of the world, how much more their fulness? . . . . If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?' (Rom. xi. 12, 15). I gather from such passages as these, and the instructive statements of the Apostle in regard to diversities of gifts—the co-operation of all the members of the body in promoting the joint welfare—the indispensable importance of different parts of a building in constituting the whole structure—as well as from the general facts relating to the progress of humanity, through the reciprocal influence of its various branches; that all the mental and moral characteristics, which have been distinctively conferred on different races, are required for the elucidation, by the human mind, of the great mysteries of religion, and for the development of man's complete stature and capabilities. The free action of one or two branches of the human family, which is alone possible in the present condition of the world, ought to be conducted with an earnest

perseverance and a deep sense of responsibility; but, at the same time, with intelligent diffidence and humility. The insensate arrogance which is displayed by those who deem themselves the qualified teachers of mankind, ought to be checked by the enlightened consciousness of not possessing a sufficiency of combined mental powers and moral sensibilities. When the Frenchman renounces his supercilious levity, and the Spaniard casts away his unintelligent bigotry; when the noble mind of Italy shakes off the torpor of ages, and Greece re-asserts her ancient vigour of intellect; when the sons of Arabia and Syria contribute a sympathetic appreciation of Scripture imagery, which almost appeals to their existing customs and modes of thought, and the subtle perceptions of the Oriental are no longer wasted on intangible fantasies; when Scandinavia and Slavonia unfold their repressed energies, and the despised children of Africa expand into mental life, beneath the fostering smile of Christian benignity; when the varied tribes, kindreds, and races of mankind apply their distinctive characteristics of thought and feeling to the vast plan of mercy exhibited in the Gospel, there will doubtless be witnessed such progress in light and knowledge as we, with our restricted capacities and bewildered notions, are incapable of conceiving. But the living, heartfelt appreciations of humanity will receive a still further increase of clearness, energy, and force, when the children of Abraham awake from the gloomy darkness in which they have long

been groping, and the fearful curse invoked by their ancestors on themselves and their descendants \* no longer weighs on their intellects and hearts. 'Blindness in part is happened unto Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?' Our imagination is unable to grasp the varied elements of glory which such a prospect suggests, in their mingled yet harmonious radiance of mental and moral light. But it ought to inspire us with a deep sense of responsibility, in employing the most earnest efforts for its accomplishment; as we are clearly and impressively admonished, both by Scriptural declarations and the solemn rebukes administered by the events of ages, that its progressive realisation is intimately connected with the fidelity and energy of Christians. We ought, at the same time, to maintain an intelligent humility in our demeanour and pretensions, and to bear in mind, that the most important mission of Christians, in all ages, is to exhibit the benign influence of the Gospel on their own character and conduct, and thus to soften the obstinacy of human resistance against the widening sway of the Redeemer's hallowed rule.

\* Matt. xxvii. 25.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PART FIRST.

I PROPOSE, in this concluding chapter, to submit my own views more fully than I have yet done; having endeavoured, by a preliminary course of reflections and considerations, to render their introduction more natural and easy. I am deeply impressed with the consciousness, that it is far easier to criticise supposed errors than to arrange and put together, in a clear and cogent manner, a chain of Scriptural truths on questions relating to the dearest interests of humanity. But I am no less profoundly convinced, that the theological systems for which Christian churches claim the acquiescence of mankind are extremely erroneous, and that they are producing very detrimental effects on the intellectual and moral qualities of our age. As general knowledge has been widely diffused among the masses, during the present century, by means of cheap publications, both of a beneficial and noxious character, the unreflecting docility of former periods can no longer be maintained. As there is a far greater degree of mental activity, throughout the whole community, than was formerly witnessed, the potency of error, in

perverting the intellect and the heart, has been intensified. It is on this account, I think, that the distorted exhibition of God's character and purposes, which our traditionary theology presents, is inflicting far more disorganising effects than could be discerned in times of general ignorance. I am painfully impressed by the conviction, that the systems of theology which are current, and the religious books, both ancient and modern, which are read by the community, produce a sort of chaos of sentiments respecting the Divine character. The ideas inculcated place us very much in the position of Luther, but with aggravated circumstances of mental difficulty. He believed that God was merciful and just; and at the same time he believed that God was acting in a way which did not appear to him to be merciful and just. There was a conflict between his religious conviction and his intellectual perception: the former triumphed, and that triumph Luther called 'the acme of faith.' But it was more easy for Luther and his contemporaries to cherish strong faith in the midst of their minor intellectual difficulties, than it is for our age. Our views in regard to the relations of man to man have been greatly altered, as I endeavoured to show in the first chapter. There are glaring incongruities between our ethical and dogmatical opinions, whether the latter are presented to us by the cruel assertions of Calvinism, or by the milder perversions of Arminianism; and they have a far more bewildering effect on our minds, than was experienced in



times of what may be called honest and almost universally pervading ferocity.

Our obstinate adherence to antiquated fallacies of one class, while we have discarded antiquated fallacies of another class, has placed us under the unhappy necessity of striving to believe that the Divine government is conducted on less enlightened and benevolent principles than are now advocated for the guidance of earthly rulers. I have endeavoured in the foregoing chapters to trace some of the noxious effects of these bewildering misconceptions, in misleading the appreciations of the intellect and perverting the movements of the moral faculties. I will make a few remarks on a phenomenon which I think is deserving of serious attention. It seems to me, from personal observation, that there is more faithfulness and honesty, in trade and commerce, among bigoted Catholic communities, where religious knowledge is very restricted, than in the midst of the most enlightened Protestant nations. Lamentations by public writers, on account of the melancholy deficiencies of conscientiousness and integrity are put forth almost daily, and curative measures are proposed and discussed. No one pretends to discern the roots of the evil; and therefore, as usual with human remedies, the correctives suggested only profess to deal superficially with some of its most troublesome outbreaks. This moral epidemic attacks seemingly pious persons with as much virulence as other men. A scrupulously regular attendance at church or chapel, family prayers, and

a large collection of religious books, appear to afford little if any protection against the insidious poison. Gigantic and more minute frauds of every description, adulteration of food, even to the extent of physical injury, and systematised contrivances to palm off shams for genuine realities, are witnessed in every department of human labour. A growing familiarity with the wide-spreading manifestations of this moral distemper is attended with the same effects as are described by the poet, when vice is 'seen too oft,' and the discernment of its evil nature is becoming obscured. I believe the moral sensibility of the community will not be restored to a healthy condition until the present chaos of incongruous opinions is succeeded by consistency, order, and harmony. 'If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness' (Matt. vi. 23). I feel convinced that the modified views on certain important points to which I referred in the first chapter, and which are now recognised as indisputable, are hopelessly at variance with the theological dogmas the erroneous character of which I endeavoured to expose in the chapter preceding this. The effort to hold both classes of sentiments confuses the notions of right and wrong, and obscures the glorious attributes of wisdom, justice, and benevolence. If a man has ideas about the plan of salvation which prevent him from discerning those elevated qualities, in its scope, design, and operation, according to our human conceptions of wisdom, justice, and benevolence, that man cannot truly and heartily believe that God is wise,

just, and good. If he does not have an impressive conviction that equity and goodness are inviolably upheld by the Creator in His dealings with His creatures, their influence on his own intellect and heart must be weakened. If placed in circumstances of temptation, the man who is under the sway of such chaotic sentiments will be in danger (unless restrained by an innate love of integrity and truth, which some natures possess) of adding to the melancholy instances which are presenting themselves, of dishonesty and fraud being allied with apparent religious sincerity. Truth and integrity among men ought not to flow simply from natural inclinations and innate characteristics. They ought to be strengthened and promoted by the theological dogmas which the Church inculcates, and to be pre-eminently exhibited by sincere professors of religion. If they are not, their operation must inevitably decline among the mass of the community. ‘If the salt have lost his salt-ness, wherewith will ye season it?’ (Mark ix. 50).

I have endeavoured to show that we are mainly indebted to the circulation of the Bible for our improved opinions on points of great importance, in regard to the relations between man and man; and for the general progress of all that is most valuable in civilisation and intellectual development. I have also brought forward reasons for supposing that in that hallowed book there are unlimited resources for promoting the onward march of Humanity; and that we have as yet only acquired

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a superficial acquaintance with the treasures of wisdom, knowledge, and moral influence which it contains. I am convinced, however, that a fatal obstacle hinders the intellectual and moral growth of the Christian Church. Systematic theology has so perverted and confused the heart-stirring declarations of the Sacred Volume, that the recognised teachers of religion, who are trained and instructed in the schools of divinity, are rather disqualified for preaching the Gospel, in its power and simplicity, instead of being enlightened and animated to the noble work. They go through a course of bewildering dissertations and expositions, in many of which is found a marvellous expenditure of verbose ingenuity to invest puerilities with an aspect of grandeur, and to depress the most exalted verities to the level of puerilities. Their ordeal may be compared, in some respects, to that of the young rabbin who applied himself to the study of the Talmud, with a reverential and joyful belief that he had been admitted into the temple of truth, and gradually became deprived of the vigour and elasticity of his intellectual faculties. The injurious consequences of such mental training, and such a mode of dealing with religious truth, were not so apparent in times of general ignorance as amid the growth of general intelligence. The system itself must be attacked by those who venerate and love the Scriptures, and believe that they exhibit a God of wisdom, rectitude, and goodness, and not a being more pitiless than Moloch, more ruthlessly destroying than the sanguinary

**deities of India.** I shall endeavour to bring forward evidences and considerations, that the plan of salvation, as unfolded in the Sacred Volume, does not veil or obscure, but clearly displays, the glorious attributes of the Divine wisdom, equity, and goodness ; not in a recondite and incomprehensible manner, but in accordance with our human notions of those elevated qualities.

My arguments may be divided into the following propositions, which I shall strive to illustrate as fully as I can, within the limits to which I must confine myself.

I. The Gospel remedy for the sins and miseries of the human race, is declared to be of an universal and comprehensive character, in numerous passages scattered throughout the New Testament. There are also intimations given, that all intelligent creatures, to whatever order they may belong, will be delivered from the baleful dominion of Moral Evil.

II. The measures which are made known appear to be fully adequate for the accomplishment of that universal purpose of benevolence.

III. The fulfilment of such a purpose would be in strict harmony with all the revealed attributes of God.

IV. The conviction that such a benevolent purpose exists may be strengthened by inferences drawn from the constitution of human nature, from the providential dealings of God with the various branches of the human race, and even

from the disorder and confusion, in the intellectual and moral features of Humanity, which have always been and still are witnessed throughout the earth.

V. If we recognise the purpose of God, as contemplating the universal welfare of all His intelligent creatures, we may perceive, in some degree, the suitability of the process employed for its accomplishment, and the reasons for the stern discipline which has been attended with so much suffering and disorder.

VI. The few texts in the New Testament which seem to declare that there will be never-ending depravity and misery in the universe must be understood in a manner consistent with the other class of scriptural passages to which I have referred.

I will bring forward a variety of biblical declarations in support of my first proposition.

Luke ii. 10, 14: 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. . . . Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill towards men.' John i. 9, 29: 'That was the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. . . . Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.' John iii. 16, 17: 'God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might

be saved.' John xii. 32, 47: 'And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me. . . . I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.' Rom. v. 18, 15, 20: 'Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. . . . But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. . . . Moreover the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' Rom. viii. 19-21: 'For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' Rom. xi. 11, 12, 15, 25, 26, 32: 'I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid; but rather, through their fall, salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fulness? . . . For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead? . . .

Blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved. . . . For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on all.' 1 Cor. xv. 22, 25, 26, and 28 : 'For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' 2 Cor. v. 18, 19 : 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation ; to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.' Phil. iii. 21 : 'According to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.' 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6 : 'For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ; who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.' 1 Tim. iv. 10 : 'We trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.' Heb. i. 2 : 'Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things.' 1 John iii. 8 : 'For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil.' 1 John ii. 2 : 'He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the



whole world.' 1 Pet. iii. 19: 'By which also He went and preached unto the spirits in prison.' Heb. ii. 9: 'That He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' Ephes. i. 10: 'That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, even in Him.' Col. i. 19, 20: 'For it pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.' 1 John iv. 8, 16: 'God is love. . . . God is love.'

It seems to me that the foregoing texts clearly indicate that the Gospel plan of mercy contemplates the welfare of all the children of men. They show, as the Arminians contend, that Christ died for all mankind, and not simply for a limited portion of them. They also justify the Calvinistic tenet, that all those for whom Christ died will be saved, in spite of their errors, perversity, and depravity—in spite of their obstinate resistance in its diversified ramifications of intensity; inasmuch as 'the excellency of the power' is of God and not of men, 'according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.' The texts which declare that the mighty Redeemer will bring all His enemies into subjection, do not refer to physical repression. They are in harmony with the announcement, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' and with the statement of the Apostle

in 2 Cor. x. 4, 5 : ' For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty, through God, to the pulling down of strongholds ; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.' The kingdom of heaven is moral and spiritual in its operation, and will accomplish the subjection of the intellect and the affections. The imagery employed is intended to depict the energy, but not the nature, of the force exerted, by the use of language appealing to the most vivid conceptions of force which human beings entertain. The imagery is the same in respect to the conquering Ruler as that which refers to the Christian soldier ; and it is strange that, although theologians interpret, in a moral and spiritual sense, the exhortations in Ephes. vi. ' Put on the whole armour of God . . . . take unto you the whole armour of God,' which relate to the conflicts of the individual warrior, they persist in giving a very different meaning to those which relate to the subjection of enemies, by the great Sovereign of the kingdom of heaven, and explain them as indicating stern repression, by means which embody our notions of physical coercion as contrasted with moral conquest. Physical subjection, as applied to a creature like man, is no real subjection. It is a harsh and irresistible pressure on his material nature, but touches not the superior essence of the spirit. This has been abundantly shown in the history of Christian martyrs—of suffering patriots

—and even of vanquished antagonists; who have rejoiced in the midst of torments—have exulted in a consciousness of mental freedom when loaded with chains—and have maintained indomitable pride and relentless hatred when crushed by overwhelming strength. The mighty Redeemer will subdue the perversity of the intellect and the malignity of the heart, and will transform them into just thoughts and tender affections. The great means for the accomplishment of this object is the manifestation of Divine love towards all the creatures of God, and of Divine self-sacrifice as prompted by that love, and connected with real suffering, the comprehension and contemplation of which will gradually reach and impress every intellect and every heart. This affecting and all-conquering truth is at present little appreciated, and indeed but faintly discerned, even by Christians, and therefore is not exhibited to the mass of mankind, whose selfishness and hardness are scarcely counteracted by any heart-stirring moral influences. I think it may be said with truth, that the systems of religion in vogue appeal\* rather to enlightened self-love, than to the purest and most elevated affections of the heart. Theologians do not represent God as a Being to be loved; and by their mode of handling what they call the Gospel, it inspires terror and aversion, instead of

\* Matthew Arnold, in an article on St. Paul and Protestantism, says, that Calvinism 'appeals pre-eminently to the desire to flee from the wrath to come;' and that Methodism, or Arminianism, 'appeals pre-eminently to the desire for eternal bliss.'

moving the tenderest sensibilities of human nature, and bringing light and strength to the intellect. It is not surprising if such a style of teaching produces self-complacency mingled with ferocity, or abject superstition, which seeks to allay uneasiness by charms and mystical appliances. They explain away the passages of Scripture which most clearly and impressively proclaim the love of God as displayed by self-sacrifice. They interpret the subjection of enemies by the great Lord of the universe as consisting of two features, entirely distinct in their nature. A select portion are to be converted from rebellious traitors into loyal friends and subjects; the rest are to remain enemies and rebels for ever, but are to be crushed by the energy of Omnipotence, and to be so restrained that outward manifestations of hostility are to be entirely suppressed, although the hostility itself will be perpetuated with an ever-increasing hideousness of intensity. I feel convinced that such a view is completely opposed to the whole structure of the Gospel scheme of wisdom and mercy; and that the subjection of the universe will be real, effective, benevolent, and harmonious in all its features.

We have allusions in the Sacred Volume to the dispensation of pain and sorrow in which all creatures are involved. 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together' (Rom. viii. 22). But there are also passages, to which I referred in a former chapter, indicating that the Creator participates in every pang of the universe.

We see that even the lower animals, although free from moral guilt, and obedient to the movements of instinct implanted in them, are exposed to varied inconveniences and pains. We wonder, as we gaze on sufferings where we can perceive no grounds of chastisement. But such murmurings are rebuked, and a solemn awe steals over every mind, which becomes impressed with the wondrous thought, that the Creator Himself suffers for the good of His creatures, and has entered into the darkest shadows of the dispensation of sorrow; enduring sympathetic pains and griefs, as well as inexpressible toils and labours, while dealing with sin in its multifarious forms and abhorrent characteristics. I think the reasons for this universal suffering are dimly intimated in the words, 'For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of Him who hath subjected the same in hope.' There is a glorious hope\* of future good, connected with a great experiment, which involves universal suffering; and we are told that 'the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.'

\* The dispensation of pain and sorrow results from the exposure to contingencies and dangers, which is indispensable to secure the permanent welfare of the human race. But it is interesting to reflect on the multiplicity of assuaging and even cheering circumstances, introduced by the tender benevolence of the Creator, with the evident design of making the stern educational process as easy and light as possible for those who are perhaps among the weakest of His intelligent creatures. How gladsome is the dwelling-place of man, what sources of enjoyment are afforded by his own physical structure, what kindly sympathies and affections arise from the ties which unite individuals and families! The Creator has provided a wealth

This and other passages seem to indicate that the design of election is not circumscribed, but comprehensive and universal. 'Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God,' we are, I think, entitled to suppose that the term 'children of God' refers to the elect, and the word 'creature' includes all intelligent, and possibly all animate, creation. It is said, 'God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on all;' or, as Conybeare and Howson render it, 'For God has shut up all together under disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all.' This is asserted of Jews and Gentiles, it being made manifest by the conduct of both parties that they are equally sinful before God. I believe this declaration extends, by an irresistible logical inference, to all the spiritually elect and non-elect, as national election is a symbol and type of spiritual election. The elect and non-elect are all equally sinful—equally averse to the rule of God—equally unable by their innate power to turn to Him. The former are 'made willing in the day of God's power' during the present life. But the Scriptures fully sustain the declaration of Calvin: 'The will is converted from an evil into a good one entirely

of physical resources to render mankind happy. The springs of sorrow and misery are to be found almost entirely in mental and moral derangement, against which He has also furnished powerful counteractives. The inferences which I draw from scriptural intimations lead me to the conjecture that the holy angels may have passed through trials far more bitter in some respects than those which are endured by Humanity.

by God. . . . Whatever is good in the human will is the work of grace.' We see the work of grace operating to a very restricted extent in this life. But the Bible unfolds to us the glorious prospect, that it will continue to operate, under the mediatorial reign of Christ, until the grand and comprehensive purposes of the Creator are fully accomplished. It seems, indeed, to be intimated, that the main object of the system of mediation is to 'gather together in one all things in Christ,'—'by Him to reconcile all things unto God;' and that when this glorious object is carried out, the system of mediation will terminate. I think that idea may be discerned in the following words: 'And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.'

I have only a limited acquaintance with the explanations given by commentators of the passages indicating the comprehensive purposes of mercy which the Gospel unfolds. I have, however, endeavoured to understand the opinions advanced by some of the most esteemed expositors, who may fairly be supposed to represent the views of those who are called orthodox Christians. In the commentary by the Rev. Albert Barnes, on Ephes i. 10, he says: 'The design of God is to restore harmony in the universe . . . to constitute one vast harmonious empire.' He, however, adds that hell is not included in this design. Consequently the whole universe would not be constituted into a har-

monious empire but only a portion of it; while the rest would present a hideous contrast of ever-increasing depravity and anguish. Dean Alford says, the words, 'gather together in one all things in Christ,' refer to 'the gathering of all individuals, not to any restoration . . . those who are not His spiritually, in mere subjugation, yet consciously.' I do not know what he means by 'mere subjugation.' Olshausen, when speaking of subjugation, says, 'The enemy is only truly vanquished when he is transformed into a friend; the *plus* of power cannot be a reason for Christ's victory, for that was *his* from the beginning.' This interesting passage is rendered by Conybeare and Howson, 'to make all things one in Christ as head;' and they say in a note that Chrysostom rendered it, 'to unite all things under one head in union with Christ.' I do not see how language could more plainly indicate universal restoration. Yet Dean Alford says a restoration is not intended, although I found no reason given for the opinion. Calvin, in his commentary on Ephes. i. 10, says: 'The meaning appears to me to be, that out of Christ all things were disordered, and that through Him they have been restored to order.' His ideas of order, however, did not require that all intelligent beings should be brought under the sway of just thoughts and right feelings. He supposed that part would be placed in that happy situation, and that the rest would be left in a state of endless hostility, depravity, and great suffering, although sternly repressed in their movements. This, in



his eyes, would constitute order. In his exposition of Col. i. 20, 21, wherein the reconciliation of all things is announced, he says: 'Should anyone on the pretext of the universality of the expression, move a question in reference to devils, whether Christ be their peace-maker also, I answer, No, not even of wicked men.' He apparently thought it quite sufficient to make this declaration, without giving reasons. Dean Alford, in his commentary on Col. i. 19, 20, makes the following remarks: 'Our interpretation may be thus summed up: all creation subsists in Christ: all creation, therefore, is affected by His act of propitiation: sinful creation is in the strictest sense *reconciled*, from being at enmity: sinless creation, ever at a distance from His unapproachable purity, is lifted into nearer participation, and higher glorification of Him, and is thus *reconciled*, though not in the strictest, yet in a very intelligible and allowable sense.' This interpretation itself requires to be interpreted, which I think may be said of many expositions of Scripture. It is so worded that universal reconciliation or restoration seems to be plainly declared. If sinful creation is in the strictest sense reconciled, I do not see that there is anything wanting to constitute universal reconciliation. Yet I suppose the Dean does not intend to convey that idea, as he rejects it in his remarks on Ephes. i. 10; and I am unable to define in what sense his summary is to be understood. In another part of the commentary on this passage he says: 'The Apostle's meaning clearly is, that, by the blood of

Christ's cross, reconciliation with God has passed *on all creation as a whole*, including angelical as well as human beings, unreasoning and lifeless things as well as organised and intelligent.' What is the meaning of 'passed on all creation as a whole,' if the reconciliation is not effective and practical? If a large part of the angelical race, and a large part of the human race, remain for ever in a state of enmity, in what comprehensible sense can reconciliation be said to have passed on them? Can the Dean really suppose that, by such a style of exposition, he enables plain, simple Christians to understand the passage more clearly than they would do without note or comment? I feel convinced that the employment of obscure language is far more fitted to perpetuate error than to advance the cause of truth. Olshausen seems to me to be more manly and straightforward in his exposition of these two highly important passages. He does not make ambiguous declarations, which are almost incomprehensible, nor does he venture on positive assertions, unsupported by reasons. In his commentaries on these two passages (Ephes. i. 10 and Col. i. 19, 20) he admits that the phraseology employed by the Apostle Paul requires us to include evil spirits, and all other intelligent beings that are in the universe, in this comprehensive design of reconciliation and gathering together in one; or, in other words, he thinks they announce a purpose of universal restoration and reconciliation. But he adds that, inasmuch as, in other passages of the New Testament, it is

stated that this beneficent purpose will not be realised, we must suppose 'that resistance is made to the comprehensive Divine design of grace by a part of the creatures. . . . God's purposes are frustrated . . . through the unfaithfulness and wickedness of men.' This is the only argument I have been able to find in the writings of commentators against the universality of the reconciliation and gathering together in one, which seems so clearly indicated in the language used by the Apostle. Calvin gives no reason for his short and decisive assertion, that neither devils nor wicked men will participate in this reconciliation. He seems to have had very strange views—not in any degree justified, I think, by the statements of the Bible, respecting evil spirits. In his commentary on 1 Cor. xv. 28 he says: 'Some infer from this that the devil and all the wicked will be saved—as if God would not altogether be better known in the devil's destruction, than if He were to associate the devil with Himself, and make him one with Himself?' How can God make the devil one with Himself? The Bible teaches us very clearly, that devils and wicked men are creatures of God, who live and move and have their being in God. They have become very depraved; but the sovereign power and grace of God is as capable of restoring them to a state of holiness as of bringing the elect out of darkness into His marvellous light. Calvin speaks as if he considered the devil to be a rival power, which must necessarily be crushed, in order to assert and maintain

God's supremacy. In the remarkable and glorious passages now under consideration, the Apostle declares, as explicitly as language can do, that all intelligent creatures will be gathered together in one, and will be reconciled to God. Yet commentators disregard the plain, unequivocal, and forcible terms employed by the Apostle, and, as Conybeare and Howson remark, in the note already quoted, 'They have devised various modes of explaining away this statement of the infinite extent of the results of Christ's redemption.' Instead of modifying the dogmas of systematic theology, by a fair interpretation of some of the most clear and forcible declarations of the Bible, their anxiety seems to be, rather to attenuate such declarations as appear to oppose those dogmas, however strong they may be, in their structure, and to give a disproportionate amount of emphasis to the texts which seem to favour those dogmas.

Olshausen admits that the language of the Apostle requires us to include evil spirits, and all other intelligent beings in this comprehensive design of reconciliation and gathering together in one. But he supposes that 'God's purposes are frustrated through the unfaithfulness and wickedness of men.' I submit that such an explanation is unsatisfactory and unreasonable in every point of view. It is opposed to the doctrine of the Divine sovereignty, which the Augustinian theology, worked up into a still more rigid system by Calvin, so clearly exhibits. It is a return to the Manichæan notion, repudiated by Augustine, that

the principle of evil is equal in strength to the principle of good; that the god of darkness will be able throughout eternity to frustrate the benevolent purposes of the God of light. It is inconsistent with the doctrine of final perseverance, which, as far as I understand it, declares that the work of grace, once begun, will be carried to a successful issue, in spite of the resistance offered by those who are its objects. This doctrine is clearly maintained by the most orthodox divines. John Newton, when speaking of God's glory displayed in redemption, refers to 'the glory of His power, in making all the acts of free agents, through a long succession of ages, subservient to this great purpose, not excepting those who most laboured to obstruct it; in changing the disposition of the sinner, however obstinate; and in carrying on His work of grace, once begun, in such feeble, inconsistent creatures as men are, in defiance of all difficulties and opposition, from within or without.' It may be said, in a most important—I was almost going to add, all-important—sense, that the work of grace has been begun, in relation to all the intelligent creatures of God, whether devils or men, however depraved they may be. The means of reconciliation, and the means of illumination, moral transformation, and sanctification have been provided, to an extent fully adequate to effect universal restoration. The supposition that the grand and magnificent design of universal restoration will be frustrated by the resistance of some sinners, is contradicted by innumerable facts and

examples. There is no conceivable form of intellectual perversity, moral turpitude, spiritual darkness, obstinate resistance, which has not been overcome by Divine influence. Therefore it seems to me very unreasonable and even absurd to allege, that the resistance of sinners is capable of frustrating the purposes of God. The bold and unhesitating assertion of Calvin is far more in harmony with the dictates of intelligence. He said, 'God could convert to good the will of the wicked. Why then does He not? Because He would not. Why He would not remains with Himself.' Calvin clearly discerned the supremacy of God, and His irresistible power, over intellectual and moral, as well as physical nature. But he evidently did not discern the purpose of God to employ that power to secure the permanent welfare of all His intelligent creatures. He therefore made the above bold assertion without irreverence. But I believe that if Augustine or Calvin had discerned the purpose of God to reconcile all things to Himself, neither the one nor the other would have imagined that the fulfilment of that purpose could or would be frustrated by the resistance of sinners. It is an undeniable fact, that resistance is made by sinners, by all sinners. But I submit that this resistance is the same in its nature, whether made by the elect, or other sinners among men, or by evil spirits, although differing in degree. The supposition that a certain degree of obstinate and perverse resistance may be overcome by Divine grace, but that an extent of resistance

beyond certain limits is capable of frustrating the Divine purposes, appears to me not only irrational, but to border on irreverence. It is much more reasonable to infer, that we have misapprehended those passages which seem to indicate that the Divine purpose will be frustrated. When two classes of texts appear to be conflicting, we ought, as conscientious and intelligent men, to use our best efforts so to interpret them as to bring harmony and consistency between them. Whether we succeed in doing so or not, it must be evident to every man of plain common sense, that we are not warranted in giving to some texts the most extreme meaning of which they are susceptible, and in explaining away other texts, equally forcible in their phraseology, so as to reject the signification which they naturally convey to any unbiassed mind.

When Dean Alford says that, 'by the blood of Christ's cross, reconciliation with God has passed on all creation as a whole,' I suppose he means that the sufferings and death of the Saviour have made full satisfaction to Divine justice, and to the dignity and firmness of the Sovereign Ruler. Therefore God can henceforth become reconciled to all sinners, whether angelical or human, on the basis of the atonement, and the obstacles to such reconciliation are entirely on their part. That is an intelligible proposition, although I think the Dean does not state it clearly. But that would be only a very partial view of the grand and glorious objects contemplated by the Gospel scheme of mercy and benevolence, and announced

in the passage referred to. It is explicitly declared that, 'having made peace through the blood of His cross,' it is the design of God 'by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself;' and (in another passage) 'that, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ.' This will be done 'according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself;' and we are expressly told that the great Mediator, who has removed what may be called the political or governmental obstacles, 'must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.' Here, then, we have full and adequate measures, not only enabling the Sovereign Ruler to forgive rebels and sinners, consistently with the firmness and dignity of His government, but, also, complete and sufficient means to overcome the obstinate resistance of sinners, and to subdue their enmity, darkness, and perversity. The removal of the governmental obstacles, or, as the Dean terms it, 'the passing of reconciliation on all creation as a whole,' would have no practical result, unless accompanied by Divine influences, producing enlightenment, purification, and moral transformation. If we turn our attention to systems of government among men, we find that the enlargement of constitutional rights for the masses produces very limited advantages, until they are fitted by intellectual and moral training to exercise those rights in a judicious manner. On this account the most enlightened and conscientious statesmen manifest



great anxiety, in our own day, to diffuse sound and wholesome education throughout the community. We see with pleasure that autonomy is granted to Canada, but should consider it a mockery to proclaim a liberal system of self-government for India in the present condition of the people. Now it seems to me that theologians attribute to the Creator a course of conduct which would be considered unwise, and even cruel, in earthly rulers. They recognise one important part of the Gospel scheme of benevolence and mercy, and ignore or even deny another equally important part; although the one would be rather injurious than beneficial without the other. There is a liberal constitution proclaimed, fitted for freemen; and all the intelligent creation is prospectively included within its glorious immunities and privileges, even as the fundamental principles of the American Declaration of Independence apply to all men as men, although practically they are as yet experienced by few. But in order to enjoy the benefits of that liberal constitution, the creature must 'be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' I contend that the Bible states as clearly that adequate means are being, and will continue to be, employed, to deliver all the intelligent creation from the bondage of corruption, as it does that reconciliation with God has passed on all creation as a whole. Viewed in that way the Gospel scheme becomes complete, effective, and real; but a one-sided view produces mental con-

fusion and moral disorganisation, because it gives an aspect of something like mockery and cruelty to measures of the most enlightened and benevolent nature. The illustrations to which I have just adverted furnish a very imperfect analogy of the relations between God and man. But I think the Bible authorises the employment of such illustrations to assist our conceptions, as it represents God in the character of a Father, a ruler, and a judge. There are some features in an upright, enlightened, and benevolent human government which afford instructive points of comparison. Such a government seeks the welfare of the whole community; and I feel convinced the Bible teaches us that the measures of the Divine administration are designed to accomplish the welfare of all the intelligent creation. Enlightened rulers are anxious to strengthen the force of intellectual and moral influences, and to diminish the necessity of physical coercion; such is also, to my mind, the evident design of the Gospel scheme of wisdom and goodness. The existence of disaffected and disorganised provinces, in connection with an earthly empire, is found to be a serious evil, and intelligent statesmen endeavour to remove the causes which produce ill-will and disorder. England is weakened by the discontent of Ireland, Russia by the animosity of Poland, and the American Republic by the smothered hatred of the Southern States. In former times it was the rule, rather than the exception, to hold conquered territories by the power of the sword. The efficacy

and energy of moral influences and forces were scarcely discerned, or even imagined. Our ideas are greatly altered on such points, which I believe is almost entirely owing to the circulation of the Bible. The principles therein unfolded, together with the lessons afforded by experience, are rendering earthly governments more humane, considerate, just, and compassionate in their conduct. In other words, the Volume of Revelation and the Book of Providence unite in teaching men that the general welfare is promoted by equity and kindness rather than by rigour and coercion. These lessons emanate from the great Author of revelation and providence, and may serve, I think, fairly and allowably, to assist our interpretations of His own gracious intentions towards His creatures. We cannot understand the infinitude of the Divine Nature ; but we are able to comprehend, in some degree, what kindness, goodness, justice, and enlightened expediency demand in the government of the universe, as well as in the measures adopted by earthly rulers. Reflections such as these strengthen my convictions, that the Scriptural passages now under consideration ought to be interpreted in the widest and most comprehensive sense ; that the Creator is seeking the welfare of all the universe ; and that the great Empire He is forming, to endure for ever, will be one of intelligence, loyalty, purity, and love, with no disorganised and disaffected provinces attached to it.

The important passage in 1 Cor. xv. 28 seems

also clearly to indicate that the whole universe will be brought into voluntary loving subjection to God. 'When all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' Olshausen says, 'It cannot be denied, that if the restoration is sanctioned in any passage it is in this . . . the enemy is only truly vanquished when he is transformed into a friend.' Dean Stanley, in his paraphrase of this verse, renders the last part as follows: 'When His work is over, He Himself will retire from the victorious contest; and God shall be the one pervading principle of the universe.' In his remarks on it he says: 'Even if, in this present world, a distinction must be allowed between God, the Invisible Eternal Father, and Christ, the Lord and Ruler of man, the representative to our dull senses of Him who is above and beyond all; he (the Apostle) points our thoughts to a time when this distinction will cease, and God will fill all the universe, and be Himself present in the hearts and minds of all.' The remarks of Dean Stanley are so worded as apparently to favour a belief in universal restoration. If 'God shall be the one pervading principle of the universe;' if 'God will fill all the universe, and be Himself present in the hearts and minds of all,'—what is the idea presented to us, if not the universal homage of the intellect and the affections? I suppose Dean Stanley was too candid and fair-minded to say that the language of this important passage does

not favour the doctrine of universal restoration ; and I fear that he shrank from explicitly avowing any opinion in its favour, as exposing him to the miserable charge of heresy. The notions of Calvin were very different, and he thus explained the words : ‘ For the present, as the devil resists God, as wicked men confound and disturb the order which He has established, and as endless occasions of offence present themselves to our view, it does not distinctly appear that God is all in all ; but when Christ will have executed the judgment which has been committed to Him by the Father, and will have cast down Satan and all the wicked, the glory of God will be conspicuous in their destruction.’ It is evident, as I have already remarked, that his idea of order did not require that the intellect and heart of the whole universe should be brought under the harmonising sway of light, purity, and love. In the cruel and ferocious age of Calvin, a community was considered very orderly if evil-doers were shut up in strong dungeons, and were prevented from molesting the well-disposed, even though no measures of reformation were adopted. His notion that the glory of God would be made conspicuous by the destruction of some of His creatures, could not have been derived from the touching declaration of St. John, that ‘ God is love.’ Gill explains the words ‘ that God may be all in all,’ as meaning ‘ the perfect government of God—Father, Son, and Spirit—over the saints to all eternity ;’ that is to say, over a portion of the universe, leaving another portion in a

state of depravity, darkness, and misery—which certainly would not be ‘all in all.’ Dean Alford says the words signify ‘that God alone may be all things in all.’ This paraphrase adds no clearness to the Sacred Text, nor does it indicate the idea of the expositor himself. As far as I can see, the Dean offers no opinion as to the way in which the apparent universality of the language is to be understood. I am much struck by the timidity and want of explicitness in most of the expositors when they have to deal with texts appearing to announce enlarged measures of benevolence, and the unhesitating readiness they display to assign the utmost force of meaning to those which have an aspect of severity and rigour. It is impossible, I think, that such inconsistent proceedings can lead to correct appreciations of great truths. Although the commentators whom I have quoted may be considered to sanction the gloomy views of orthodoxy, either by distinct acquiescence, or by the absence of formal dissent; yet it cannot be said that their views are harmonious, or that they vindicate the correctness of the orthodox dogmas by their comments on the passages referred to. Under such circumstances it can hardly be deemed presumptuous, if a Christian of plain common sense ventures to interpret the glorious texts under consideration in the widest and most comprehensive manner. As an argument for such an interpretation, I submit that it would be in accordance with the whole structure of the Gospel, and with the numerous Scriptural declarations I

have cited in support of my first proposition. If universal restoration and reconciliation is the great object which the Creator is pursuing, then the Gospel becomes 'good tidings of great joy;' the true Light 'lighteth every man that cometh into the world;' He who was 'lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto Him. . . . Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. . . . The creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption. . . . God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that He might have mercy on all. . . . As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. . . . God is the saviour of all men, specially of those that believe. . . . Christ is the heir of all things. . . . He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. . . . He has tasted death for every man. . . . God is love.' If we do not recognise universal restoration and reconciliation as the design of the Gospel scheme, we are obliged to explain away the most obvious signification of all those texts, and to derive notions from them of an extremely vague, uncertain, and indefinite nature. We are, moreover, compelled to alter the usual meaning of the terms goodness, equity, and wisdom; and to suppose that, when applied to the government of the universe, they must be taken in an incomprehensible sense, which we vainly strive to decipher. We place ourselves in the unhappy situation of witnessing an irreconcilable discrepancy between dogmatical theology and evangeli-

cal morality. We may endeavour to soothe our uneasiness by reading bewildering dissertations on the Finite and the Infinite; and by listening to those who depreciate human reason\* to such an extent, as to deprive it of the faculty of judging between true and false religions. Yet we find that all such appliances and resources are insufficient to enlighten our intellect, and to allay our moral disquietude.

**My Second Proposition is :—**

The measures which are made known appear to be fully adequate for the accomplishment of that universal purpose of benevolence.

It is impossible to conceive of measures more potential, and more completely fitted, in all respects, to carry an object into effect. The Incarnation and Atonement meet the difficulty as to the possibility of extending a free, full, and frank pardon to transgressors and rebels, without loosening, in the slightest degree, the claims of God's firm and righteous rule over the wide extent of creation. A Divine self-sacrifice of such a wondrous nature tends to impress the intelligence of the universe with the conviction that every great principle will be inviolably maintained. At the same time it contains the elements of mighty and

\* If human reason is not competent to judge whether the Divine Government, as represented by theologians, manifests wisdom, justice, and goodness, or the reverse, why may not the advocates of Heathenism make similar allegations in support of their own immoral and cruel dogmas?



irresistible action on the coldest and most perverse natures, by the amazing proofs of compassion and love which it displays. By this double and complete suitability to meet all the exigencies of the situation, peace is made in both senses, 'through the blood of the cross.' But this is not all. The resistance offered by the fearful antagonism of moral evil is so obstinate, that even this marvellous display of the tender and loving character of God would not suffice to enlighten, soften, and purify. Therefore the powerful energy of Divine influences is also given, through the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, and is applied, with the most minute, patient, and gentle perseverance and efficacy, on the chaos of intellectual perversity—the thick and impenetrable mists of darkness—the vast and gigantic mass of depravity, coldness, and malignity. Thus there is nothing whatever wanting for the accomplishment of the grand purpose of universal benevolence which is so clearly unfolded.

The Third Proposition is :—

The fulfilment of such a purpose would be in strict harmony with all the revealed attributes of God.

His justice, truth, and equity would be satisfied by the expiatory offering of the Son of God ; His purity and high intelligence, by the restoration of sinners to the Divine image, through the efficacious influences of the Holy Spirit. But when I reflect on the benignant quality 'love,' which the Apostle John stated to be the pre-eminent characteristic

of the Divine Nature, I do not see how its unutterable tenderness could be satisfied, if any of those sinners, even one, should be left in a state of everlasting depravity and woe. So long as malignity, impurity, and misery exist in any degree, the harmonies of the universe must be marred, and pure, benignant natures must suffer painful emotions. Even our own moral organisation, in spite of the defects and selfishness occasioned by sin, may convince us of this. We find that the more we are swayed by benevolent sentiments, the more anxious do we feel to strive against social evils of every class, and to diminish the load of misery that exists. Although our lives are short—and, with feeble powers, soon decaying—we know that we can do but little, we are still desirous to use our utmost efforts. Nay, we are irresistibly impelled to do so, by every noble feeling which the Gospel awakens and strengthens. We never imagine that ills, even of the most stubborn and deeply-rooted nature, are absolutely incapable of being counteracted and diminished. Can we suppose that intelligent, energetic, holy, and benevolent beings, who have an immortality before them, will be content to see gigantic torrents of depravity and anguish, and to regard them as irremediable? Theologians put forth the idea that a vast, harmonious empire of love, purity, and light is to be constituted, side by side with a dreary region, where disorder, darkness, intense hatred, and inconceivable woe are to be perpetuated, with no hope of alleviation, still

less of removal. This idea is most revolting to any mind and heart that are softened and purified by the hallowed sway of religion. It is indeed so monstrous (when tested by any rules of probability or possibility with which we are acquainted), that I believe future ages will contemplate with astonishment the fact of its having been entertained by a long succession of pious and intelligent men. The growing appreciation of benevolent principles among ourselves would not tolerate the deliberate abandonment, by the rest of the community, of the most perverse and criminal to a state of anarchy and hopeless misery, even though they might be effectually prevented from inflicting injury on the better-disposed. Can we, then, suppose that God—who is the author of those more enlightened principles, and the source from whence all our tender sensibilities proceed—will abandon any of His creatures to such a condition, when He has provided the most complete measures for the recovery of all? I venture to affirm, that all the deductions which enlightened reason may make respecting God, from the manifestation of His character and great qualities, as displayed in Nature, Providence, and Revelation, lead to the irresistible conviction that He would not bring any class of beings into existence unless able to minister to their welfare and to secure their happiness. Butler's 'Analogy,' if I have understood its scope and design correctly, has always appeared to me to take a very partial and narrow view of a great subject. He perceives a certain condition of discipline, pain,

and trial in this life ; and, instead of regarding it as a means to the accomplishment of universal good, he seems to consider it as a type of that which is to endure throughout the countless ages of eternity. I submit that this is a very unreasonable conclusion. But, even supposing that we were to take our stand upon the analogies afforded by the present life, we might derive cheerful hopes instead of gloomy forebodings. We find there are possibilities of amelioration under the most discouraging circumstances. We not unfrequently see a man, who appeared hopelessly perverse and depraved, becoming an improved character. We are sometimes affected and astonished by the softening influence which purity, gentleness, and kindness may exercise on the most callous, vicious, and degraded. Why not regard such cheering facts as indications of future results, beyond the confines of the present life ?

The Fourth Proposition is :—

The conviction that such a benevolent purpose exists may be strengthened by inferences drawn from the constitution of human nature ; from the providential dealings of God with the various branches of the human race ; and even from the disorder and confusion, in the intellectual and moral features of Humanity, which have always been, and still are, witnessed throughout the earth.

I believe that we have a spirit which is so intimately connected with the material organisation of the body that it can make no movement what-

ever in this life, except through that organisation. In deep sound sleep, enjoyed by a person in perfect health, there appears to be no mental consciousness at all, because the brain is entirely at rest, and the nervous and muscular systems are locked in complete repose. Dreams, in such a case, only seem to occur when the process of waking begins. If they are frequent or constant, it indicates some derangement of the physical organs, which prevents the unbroken repose of the nervous system. In drunkenness, delirium, and insanity, the spirit is unable to think aright, because the physical organisation, through which alone it exercises its powers, is injuriously affected. When the mental faculties are perfectly clear and lucid in the last moments of a human life, it is because the brain has remained unaffected by disease. The spirit is influenced, both in its intellectual and moral action, by the innate physical tendencies inherited from parents. I believe our physical nature alone is transmitted to us by our parents (the more ethereal parts of which, including the brain and nervous system, are called by some the soul), and that we derive our spirits, in a more direct manner, from God Himself. I see no reason to suppose that the spirit of a newly-born infant is in any degree corrupt. I think it becomes so by reason of its connection with a deteriorated physical organisation, and by the injurious influences to which it is exposed. The body without the spirit is nothing but inert matter, and yet is so wondrously constructed that the spirit,

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while united to it, is restrained and enslaved by fetters which it cannot shake off; but against which it may strive in such a way as to develop its own latent powers, to diminish the injurious influence of the body, and even to improve the nature of the physical organs through which it exercises consciousness, perception, cogitation, volition, and emotion. It is by this reciprocal action that human elevation and degradation take place. These reflections lead to the strong inference of a purpose of discipline, which most assuredly is carried out very imperfectly in this life, and seems to be a preliminary stage, in connection with a vast and comprehensive design for training spirits, which come into existence with boundless but undeveloped capacities, and commence their being in a state of complete ignorance and inexperience.

There are three features in human nature which, I think, are instructive as indications of important truths. There is a generally pervading conviction that our existence will not terminate at the close of the present life, which has been used as an argument for the immortality of the spirit. There is the consciousness that we have the faculty of choice, in selecting one course or another, and of control in the regulation of our speech and conduct; and the propriety of exacting moral responsibility for human actions has been denied by few. Yet we are at the same time conscious of being, not unfrequently, almost irresistibly impelled, by our innate tempers and dispositions, by the influence

of other men, and by a variety of circumstances independent of us. Still, the sense of free will remains stamped on our convictions, in spite of opposing evidences and ingenious arguments. So, in like manner, almost all the human race have had a yearning for universal happiness. There are vague traditions, in almost every land, of a primeval age of innocence and bliss. There are fond expectations, cherished by multitudes, that a millennium will be witnessed on earth. Now I believe that these indelible convictions and irrepressible aspirations are foretastes and earnest of great and glorious realities. 'The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.' 'The creature shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' 'The tabernacle of God shall be with men . . . and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things shall have passed away.'

I draw an inference, in the same direction, from the providential dealings of God with the different branches of the human race. When I reflect on the declarations of Scripture, seeking to illustrate one portion by another, I arrive at the conviction that God does not love one race of men more than another, nor certain individuals more than their fellows, but regards all with equal benevolence. Yet I find great contrasts in the position of nations, both in past times and at the present period; great contrasts in the comfort and well-

being of different classes belonging to the same nation; and the most painful contrasts in the circumstances of individuals, irrespective of comparative merits or demerits. I am unable to see that such distinctions have produced, or are likely to produce, any proportionate advantages to the human race in this life, and am led to the conclusion that they form part of a process of discipline, the beneficial effects of which will be witnessed in a future state of existence.

The intellectual and moral disorder and confusion throughout the world, which have always appeared hopeless, and still appear so, produce a similar impression on my mind. There is a *régime* of necessity, through the influence of instincts, which is attended with happy results to the lower animals. Although a principle of active destruction is introduced to a great extent, it is so tempered by the wisdom and goodness of God, that vigour and animation are communicated thereby to the various tribes that inhabit the earth, the water, and the air, whether pursuing or pursued. They have a life of enjoyment, not too much prolonged; and although they have been brought within the shadow of the dispensation of sorrow and pain, their obedience to the movements of instinct almost always guides them aright, and most of their sufferings arise from the want of intelligent benevolence, and from the action of thoughtless or malignant cruelty on the part of man. The *régime* of necessity which rules over their own natures produces the greatest amount of enjoyment and happiness con-



ceivable under a system in which a principle of destruction operates. That principle is so wondrously adjusted that it does not occasion disorder and disorganisation, but rather an equilibrium of varied existences, and the possibility of conferring short and happy lives on such countless myriads of creatures, that the human mind vainly endeavours to estimate the extent of animate existence. There is also a *régime* of necessity operating on human nature, through strong instincts, inherited defects, fierce passions, and ungovernable impulses, as well as by mutual coercion, and the inexorable chain of interweaving destinies. The action of free will combines with this *régime* of necessity in a manner so erratic and ill-regulated, that it aggravates the ills which afflict humanity. It seems clear that the earth contains abundant resources to secure the physical comfort of a much larger amount of population than exists at present, and that if human beings acted with justice and kindness, as well as intelligence, they might all be happy. Nothing prevents them from being so, except their own misdoings and ill-regulated feelings. Yet while birds and beasts steadily pursue a course of practical utility, and adaptability to their necessities and welfare, and there is no want or squalid misery among them in their natural condition, men and women are constantly injuring themselves and tormenting each other. It seems impossible for them, even when living in the most civilised communities, to act on what may be called rational principles, even in reference to the present life, viewed irrespectively of any-

thing beyond it. Why should that which we call instinct, and which resides in lower natures, fulfil useful objects with regularity and order, while the ethereal essence we call the spirit, residing in higher natures, fails to accomplish its most important and indispensable functions? The latter is, confessedly, by far the nobler motive power, and we believe that both have been implanted by a God of wisdom and benevolence. When I contemplate these mysterious phenomena, I draw a strong inference that human spirits are undergoing a preliminary stage of painful but necessary discipline connected with a vast scheme of universal benevolence, and this supposition invests even disorder and confusion with promise. But when I turn to the elucidations of theologians, I find nothing but an inexplicable maze of additional difficulties.

The Fifth Proposition is:—

If we recognise the purpose of God, as contemplating the universal welfare of all His intelligent creatures, we may perceive, in some degree, the suitability of the process employed for its accomplishment, and the reasons for the stern discipline which has been attended with so much suffering and disorder.

When I reflect on the action of Moral Evil, and attempt to conjecture its origin and probable causes, I immediately feel that my imperfect faculties restrain my efforts. But I experience similar difficulties when I reflect on other subjects:

animal and vegetable life for instance, my own complex nature, or any physical phenomena. In regard to moral evil, some thoughts present themselves which assist my mind, in a faint degree, to enter on the rudiments of the question ; or at least they appear to do so to myself. I endeavour to imagine the condition of the first created intelligences upon their entrance into existence. They must necessarily have been without any experience whatever, and if possessed of knowledge, it must have been intuitive or instinctive. If not possessed of knowledge in reference to the real properties of things, in respect to the Creator, their relations to Him and to each other, they must inevitably have been liable to misconception and error. Let us suppose that their faculties and powers were good, as indeed is clearly indicated in the Bible ; yet it seems to me that excess and misdirection in that which is good when under due regulation, may constitute the incipient stage of moral evil. Until the position of the Creator in the universe and His character were unfolded to their comprehension, by the course of events within their cognisance, they could not have acquired any definite notions on those important topics, except by what may be called a forcible infusion of knowledge, not based on previous consciousness and observation. Nor could they have understood at first their relations to each other, and the exact boundary line between the maintenance of individual rights and the fulfilment of mutual claims, so as to conciliate the

requirements of equity and benevolence with the legitimate demands of enlightened self-love. It is worthy of notice that phrenologists have included no bad qualities among the constituent elements of human nature. There is no organ of malignity or deceit, according to their system. They seem to explain the vices and crimes which afflict humanity, by the excess or misdirection of qualities which are good if properly employed and controlled by other faculties. But the excess or misdirection of some occasions diminished action and even paralysation in others. Thus the excess of self-esteem engenders pride; and, when mingled with the love of approbation in an inordinate degree, vanity is called into existence; both leading to selfishness, unless counteracted by benevolence and the higher intellectual faculties. The preponderance of firmness is apt to degenerate into obstinacy; and the wish to acquire desirable objects of earthly good, although salutary when rightly directed, often introduces frightful disorders into the moral nature. Even the tenderest emotions, if not suitably guided, become instruments of torment and injury to the individual and to others. This is particularly the case in regard to the sexual affections, which may either soften and purify the character, or be transformed into prolific sources of degradation and perdition. We may reject the claims of Phrenology to be considered as a science; but I think no intelligent person can deny that relative excess and misdirection of good qualities lead to injurious conse-

quences. This important fact throws light, as it appears to me, on the probable origin of moral evil, if we suppose that forcible or artificial knowledge was not infused into intelligent natures on their entrance into existence. Instinctive knowledge, or even clear and forcible statements, made to beings entirely ignorant and inexperienced, with no recollections of past facts or circumstances which may furnish a basis of illustration and comprehension, must produce an effect altogether different from the impressive and indelible convictions implanted by personal contact with the contingencies and realities of the universe. The 'Happy Valley' system of moral training and delicate shelter from pain, grief, and contamination, so graphically depicted in the tale of 'Rasselas,' would be ill-adapted to prepare intelligent beings, endowed with boundless, but undeveloped, capacities for an endless existence.

I have read with some surprise a course of observations by Mr. Mansel, in 'Limits of Religious Thought,' on the subject of moral evil as connected with eternal punishments. He says: 'The real riddle of existence—the problem which confounds all philosophy, aye, and all religion too, so far as religion is a thing of man's reason—is the fact that evil exists *at all*; not that it exists for a longer or shorter duration. Is not God infinitely wise, and holy, and powerful *now*? and does not sin exist along with that infinite holiness and wisdom and power? Is God to become more holy, more wise, more powerful hereafter; and must evil be

annihilated to make room for His perfections to expand? Does the infinity of His eternal nature ebb and flow with every increase and diminution in the sum of human guilt and misery? This appears to me shocking nonsense, with a touch of irreverence, though not so intended. Why should the temporary existence of moral evil, even though it endure for millions of ages, be considered an insoluble mystery? Do not all the analogies with which we are acquainted assist in explaining it? As well might we be lost in astonishment because the glorious form of the soaring butterfly is preceded by the degradation of the crawling worm. As reasonably might we murmur because an ignorant and inexperienced child is full of false conceits and ill-directed impulses, even when endowed with innate qualities of a high order, which gradually expand into thoughtful, conscientious, energetic manhood. Perhaps, however, it may be replied, that these are not analogies; they are kindred mysteries of a subordinate nature. According to the views of the objectors, there should be no crawling degradation; there should be no folly, arising from ignorance and inexperience. The fable of Minerva springing into existence fully armed, and with a complete stock of wisdom ready for immediate use, ought to be made a reality. It shocks them that creatures should have to learn gradually how to use their faculties aright. They would have them invested with the mature results of experience, without undergoing any process for its acquisition; or, at any rate, their

sensibilities are painfully wounded, because the infancy of intelligent creation is not delicately sheltered from the pains and inconveniences which attach to ignorance and inexperience. This intricate subject presents itself to some minds very differently from the aspect it assumes to others. In the 'Edinburgh Review' for October 1869, I find sentences with which I cannot sympathise. The old perplexity which has so long bewildered men is thus stated: 'Given a God omniscient and all-benevolent, and the existence of evil is (in the ordinary sense) impossible. Yet it does exist. And the eternal perdition of a soul is, fundamentally, not a whit more irreconcilable with those attributes of the Deity than is the suffering of a moment's pain.' It seems strange that intelligent men, such as the Reviewer, should not have tried to work out a problem something like the following: If we recognise a God, omniscient and all-benevolent, and the existence of intelligent creatures whom He destines for immortality, how can His desire to secure their permanent welfare be best accomplished? I understand the Reviewer to mean by evil, not only sin, but all pain and inconvenience. It is my effort, in this work, to show that pain and suffering are promoting the welfare of the intelligent creation; and that even moral evil is rendered an instrument of good, by the wondrous alchemy of Divine wisdom. Mr. Mansel goes on to say: 'We may be told that evil is a privation, or a negation, or a partial aspect of the universal good, or some other equally un-

meaning abstraction ; whilst, all the while, our own hearts bear testimony to its fearful reality, to its direct antagonism to every possible form of good. But this mystery, vast and inscrutable as it is, is but one aspect of a more general problem ; it is but the moral form of the ever-recurring secret of the Infinite. How the Infinite and the Finite, in any form of antagonism, or any other relation, can exist together ; how infinite power can co-exist with finite activity ; how infinite wisdom can co-exist with finite contingency ; how infinite goodness can co-exist with finite evil ; how the Infinite can exist in any manner without exhausting the universe of reality ;—this is the riddle which Infinite Wisdom alone can solve.’ All that may be true ; but it is not necessary for us to try and comprehend the infinite, while we are sorely puzzled by many objects which range among the finite. Let us confine our attention to important facts, which we can appreciate to some extent. Mr. Mansel enquires, ‘Is God to become more holy, more wise, more powerful hereafter?’ Not so : He is, always has been, and always will be, complete in His glorious perfections. But it pleased Him to bring creatures into being, and to confer upon some an immortal existence. However excellent their faculties may be, they must be liable to errors and misconceptions, in regard to the complicated relations of the universe, until they acquire knowledge and experience. I can imagine two modes of training them for an endless existence. The one is the ‘Happy Valley’ system of careful shelter



and constraint; the other, of free exposure to dangers and contingencies, with the inevitable result of moral evil and its countless woes. Under the one (if all intelligent creatures had been thus trained) their knowledge would have been circumscribed, their faculties would have had limited scope for expansion, and indeed, so far as I can grasp the subject, they must have always remained more like puppets than free agents. Under the other, there was the certainty of incalculable disorder, corruption, and misery, and, in the judgment of any finite mind, a fearful risk of overwhelming ruin. But if the process should be carried out with success, the result would be an universe of intelligent creatures, full of life and vigour, well acquainted with danger in every form, cognisant of the most complicated relations, contingencies, and liabilities, conversant with the most diversified emotions, conceptions, and ideas, and having all their faculties and sensibilities developed into a consciousness of energy, free movement, and expansion, whereby they would be fitted for an immortality of safety, happiness, and never-ending progress. The one system would cultivate kindly, gentle, and benevolent feelings, and introduce its disciples into scenes of tranquil pleasures, free from painful agitations. The other would inure them to hardships in every shape, expose them to raging passions, vices, and crimes, to agony, darkness, horror, and despair; but would also bring out hope and trust, unshaken courage, unwavering constancy, inextinguishable tenderness; would call

forth indomitable fortitude, patient self-control, unhesitating self-sacrifice; would brace up the soul to heroic efforts and unflinching endurance. Under the one the Creator would appear as the benignant and mild Parent of a well-ordered family. Under the other He displays exquisite sensibilities and strong feelings, the most unwearied patience and unswerving firmness; He oftentimes envelops Himself in darkness, hides the tenderness of His nature, assumes an aspect of unrelenting wrath, is content to be misunderstood and calumniated for ages; He takes upon Him an unceasing course of irksome labours, subjects Himself to the most painful sacrifices—even, in a certain sense, descending, for a time, from the unruffled felicity of the Godhead, and placing himself in the front rank of the fierce conflicts between Moral Good and Moral Evil.

Mr. Mansel quotes Bishop Butler as saying: 'The Divine moral government which religion teaches us, implies that the consequence of vice shall be misery in some future state, by the righteous judgment of God. . . . There is no absurdity in supposing future punishment may follow wickedness of course, as we speak, or in the way of natural consequence, from God's original constitution of the world, from the nature He has given us, and from the condition in which He places us.' That is the idea I have. Moral evil must always torment and degrade, until an intelligent creature is delivered from it. Such is its natural consequence in the constitution of things

appointed by the Creator. Mr. Mansel says :  
' May we not trace something not wholly unlike the irrevocable sentence of the future, in that dark and fearful, yet too certain, law of our nature, by which sin and misery ever tend to perpetuate themselves ; by which evil habits gather strength with every fresh indulgence, till it is no longer, humanly speaking, in the power of the sinner to shake off the burden which his own deeds have laid upon him ? In that mysterious condition of the depraved will—compelled and yet free—the slave of sinful habits, yet responsible for every act of sin, and gathering deeper condemnation as the power of amendment grows less and less, may we not see some possible foreshadowing of the yet deeper guilt, and the yet more hopeless misery of the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched ?' I think there is much force in these remarks. The action of sin is always progressive, and must be so for ever, when operating on an immortal being ; and the misery would also be proportionately increasing—unless, indeed, the natural effect of sin is to sap the vitality even of spirits, and ultimately to extinguish existence. Consequently, unless God applies measures of counteraction and recovery, the depravity and misery in a future state can never cease, but must constantly grow in intensity, until the sum would be beyond all finite calculation. It would indeed be a bottomless pit, a worm that dieth not, a fire that is not quenched, because the possibility of self-deliverance on the part of creatures, even

though originally endowed with the highest faculties, would be constantly diminishing in an inverse ratio to the progression of sin. 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil' (Jer. xiii. 23). They would be sinking lower and lower, the gnawings of the worm would become more and more poignant, the fierceness of the flames would ever be augmenting. No direct infliction is required to produce eternal torments, but simply the abstinence of Divine interposition to deliver intelligent beings from the sway and action of sin. But the fearful situation to which reference has now been made, is emphatically 'the bondage of corruption;' and it is expressly declared, 'the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.' Even if the words translated 'bondage of corruption' might be more correctly rendered 'slavery to death,' we may fairly suppose spiritual death, eternal death, to be included, so that the sense would substantially be the same. Mr. Mansel says the real riddle of existence is that evil exists at all; not that it exists for a longer or shorter duration. That would be true if we had not the Bible in our hands, as human reason, unenlightened by Revelation, cannot explain the existence of moral evil. But it appears painful and strange that eminent minds, who recognise the Divine authority of the Sacred Volume, should regard moral evil as an inexplicable mystery, because it implies that in

their judgment its existence does not seem consistent with the wisdom and goodness of God. I submit that a sincere Christian of high intelligence, who entertains such sentiments, has strong grounds to mistrust his theological system. Our Saviour said to His disciples, 'Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God.' He Himself, during His life, only explained mysteries very partially; but He gave the cheering promise, 'Howbeit, when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth.' The Apostle Paul said, that he and his fellow-workers were 'the stewards of the mysteries of God.' It is true that he also stated, 'now we see through a glass darkly.' Nevertheless, we are entitled to search the complete disclosures of revelation, with the hope of discovering some elucidation in regard to a fearful enigma, which causes even Christians to call in question the wisdom and goodness of God, and perpetuates infidelity in upright and conscientious minds. I rejoice in the conviction that a benignant radiance has been shed on the dark problem, and that we may recognise with admiration the magnificence of the Creator's plan, in the Gospel scheme for converting the deadly poison of moral evil into a means of discipline, expansion of knowledge, and development of free will. Intelligent Christians, instead of depressing weaker minds, and confirming infidel doubts, by gloomy ponderings in a region of darkness, ought joyfully to trace Divine wisdom and goodness by the clear shining of heavenly light.

I believe the wisdom of the Creator will be clearly and impressively discerned, as soon as His amazing love for His creatures is suitably appreciated. When Christians divest themselves of the narrow-minded notions descending from dark and ferocious ages, and view the Creator as the beneficent Parent of the universe, their ideas about moral evil will be modified. They will then perceive that, although a deadly curse in its own nature, properties, and tendencies, it is being made an instrument of universal good, because the Creator has been willing to undergo the painful sacrifices and irksome labours which such a stern process of discipline imposed on Himself, and without which it must have brought overwhelming ruin on His creatures. Hitherto it has been considered orthodox to deny those sacrifices and labours, and to represent them as something like a mere semblance, and not a reality, whereby human minds have been enveloped in mists of hopeless darkness when attempting to deal with the subject. I believe it is impossible to have right views concerning moral evil, unless we have impressive conceptions in regard to the self-sacrifices of the Divine Being. Viewed in itself, apart from the wondrous measures which alone could render it a possible means of benefit, it must always awaken the most gloomy ideas and the most desponding emotions. Until Athanasius and Arius disputed as to whether the nature of the Word suffered, Christians were allowed to be naturally impressed by the language of Scripture ; and the love of

Christ, as shown by a reality of suffering, affected their minds and hearts without any subtle hindrances counteracting the influence of this great fact. Although Athanasius was very zealous and ardent in opposing the heresies of Arius, he seems practically to make the same assertion as Arius, in regard to the great sacrifice for sin. Arius maintained that a created being suffered for sinners. Athanasius affirmed that there were sufferings, but that they were not borne by the Divine Nature; consequently they must have been borne by a created being. It seems to me that the error of Athanasius is of a nature as injurious as that of Arius. The one denied the Incarnation of the Divinity, and the other represented it as an unreal thing; for surely it is a conception of an unreal thing, to suppose that the Son of God took upon him our nature, and yet did not feel the sorrows and pangs of humanity; it is a conception of an unreal thing to suppose that the Son of God suffered for sinners, and yet that those sufferings were not borne by Him in His own nature. Such a vague, confused, illogical, nullifying mental process deprives the most explicit declarations of Scripture of their validity and truthfulness, and converts a solemn and affecting reality into a mere semblance—shadowy and intangible—which can neither impress the intellect nor the heart. I do not see what plea can be offered for such a mode of treating the subject. It explains nothing, introduces no light into the understanding, produces no beneficial moral influence. On

the contrary, not only is the mind dragged into a maze of increased perplexities, but the moral sensibilities remain impassive and are even obdurate. Such a theology may be held by the most ferocious and cruel natures, without renouncing a particle of selfishness or malignity. It may be pondered over without awakening a throb of honest affection to God, or disclosing even a glimpse of the tenderness of that great Being whose preeminent characteristic is love. Let that be a test of its truth; let it be known by its fruits. I believe that when the bewildering dogmas of Athanasius were accepted by the Church, the purifying and elevating principle of self-sacrifice, the most potent weapon in the armoury of Heaven against moral evil, became so neutralised by counter-statements, that thenceforth it scarcely touched the heart of Humanity. In the days of the Apostles and their immediate successors, it moved the whole civilised world; and I believe it is yet destined to regenerate and transform the social fabric.

We only have cognisance of two orders of intelligent beings: those we call angels, and our own race. The holy angels are denominated 'elect' in the Scriptures (1 Tim. v. 21), which term is also applied to certain persons of the human family. It appears clear to my mind that the latter have divine influences of a special nature exerted upon them, which are not granted to the rest of mankind. I infer that special influences were also exerted on the elect or chosen



angels, restraining their freedom of movement for a time by strong moral constraint; and that they were thus maintained in a state of purity and holiness, while the rest were not forcibly upheld, in the midst of ignorance and inexperience, although originally endowed with faculties of intellect and moral qualities of a high order, not inferior to those of the elect angels. The holy angels were, however, able to acquire impressive knowledge, by witnessing the fearful action of moral evil, and the march of stern and awful events. We have no reason to suppose that the good were, or are, separated from the evil by obstacles preventing mutual cognisance and communication. Like Enoch they 'walked with God' in the midst of growing perversity, mockery, and malignity. I surmise that, in proportion as they obtained increasing knowledge, and their faculties were developed into growing vigour, the tender guidance of the Creator was modified, so as to expand their liberty of action without endangering their safety. It seems clear, from the statements of the Bible, that they have been, and are still, learning the character of God, the solemn realities of the universe, the position of creatures towards each other and towards the Creator, from the sad and painful spectacles they have witnessed, and the wondrous measures of the Divine administration. We see from Eph. iii. 10, 1 Pet. i. 12, and other passages, that 'the manifold wisdom of God' has been unfolded to the angels by His dealings with the children of men, and that they desire to look

into these things. Our first parents were created upright, even as were all other intelligent beings; but they were necessarily ignorant and inexperienced. They were not upheld by strong moral constraint, and fell; and their fall brought sin upon all their descendants. But the ruin was of a mitigated character, with mingled elements of hope and terror; and the blighting curse of moral evil was not exhibited with such overwhelming intensity as on the angelic order of beings. The measure of election in regard to some among the human race (apparently a small proportion) seems to me the same in principle and beneficent design as that which has been applied to part of the angels. But, instead of preserving the elect of mankind entirely from sin, the influences which operate on them illuminate, regenerate, sanctify, and gradually deliver them from the dominion of moral evil.

We have presented to us, in the Sacred Volume, by obscure intimations and more explicit declarations, the action of moral evil under a variety of circumstances. The holy angels have been brought in contact with it. They have not been secluded in a sheltered spot, where all was lovely, peaceful, and joyous, and from whence they might only hear a faint rumour of transgression and misery. The idea of heaven conveyed to my mind by scriptural declarations, is not of a locality but a condition of the intellectual and moral faculties. The angels are always represented as cognisant of sin and misery, not only as witnesses, but as com-

batants and active agents. They may have passed, in the infancy of their existence, through great difficulties and trials, the nature of which we can only conjecture from inferences and supposed analogies. We do not know if angelic beings are constituted of a spiritual essence alone, or whether that spiritual essence is permanently connected with a material organisation more subtle than our own, and better fitted for the development and expansion of all their powers. We can form no distinct conception of their mode of existence, their relations to each other, the nature of their intellectual and moral consciousness, or the manner in which they are brought in contact with time, space, and that which we call the physical universe. They may have organs and faculties of perception, cogitation, comprehension, and emotion, utterly inconceivable by us with our present limited capacities. It is clear, however, that the holy angels are animated by love and benevolence, that they rejoice in the triumph of moral good over moral evil, and are affected with grief and compassion at the sight of sin and misery. The dangers and trials of the angelic race must, I think, have arisen, in a great degree, from the difficulty of rightly using their intellectual and moral faculties in the beginning of their career, by reason of ignorance and inexperience. Perhaps the Creator has hidden Himself from all His creatures in the infancy of their existence, as a necessary measure for their good. The earliest consciousness of created beings may have

been in the midst of chaotic elements, with but faint indications of a guiding superintendence. Some may have exulted in the possession of vast energies, seemingly illimitable, engendering the notion of being self-sustained and independent of superior control. Others may have been comparatively weak, encouraging injustice and oppression on the part of those who deemed themselves endowed with paramount might, and gradually developing selfishness and malignity. Perhaps the weakest were supported by influences of an occult nature, implanting trust in an unseen Creator, and a meek endurance of wrongs. To them it was given gradually to discern the wisdom, goodness, and power of God; and when the foundations of the earth were laid, 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy' (Job xxxviii. 7). They may have been bewildered by the slow processes of physical organisation, producing no apparent results of adequate utility during a weary succession of ages. Their gladness on beholding intellectual and moral life, in being differently constituted from themselves, must have been changed into perplexity and sorrow, when they witnessed corruption and misery on this earth, and perhaps among other modifications of intelligent natures differing from themselves. Their kindly sensibilities have been sorely tried while gazing with intense interest on the fearful dramas of moral evil. I imagine that benevolent natures must always experience an earnest longing to afford succour and relief, particularly to inno-

cence, in its incipient struggles with sin and sorrow. But I surmise that the angels have been constantly curbed by restraints, if not prohibitions, in the exercise of their intellectual and moral vigour for the repression of evil; and have beheld the subtle potentates of darkness exulting in a wide, and sometimes almost universal, dominion over this fair earth, and perhaps over many other regions. It may be that often, when liberty was accorded to them to employ benign, in opposition to malignant, influences on souls enveloped in mists of darkness, and bound by trammels of sin, they have found themselves powerless to introduce even a ray of hallowed light, or to loosen a single fetter. Many dark enigmas may have perplexed them for ages, and their perceptions of the Creator's comprehensive purposes of benevolence may have been gradual. We have some disclosures of the joy with which they hailed the Advent of the mighty Redeemer, and of their tender sympathies for erring humanity.

I offer these conjectures respecting the angels, because I believe they are far more in accordance with the intimations given in the Bible than the popular notions, as also with the analogies furnished by the trials of humanity. But whether they approximate nearer to the truth or not, it seems clear that the process of discipline by which their faculties have been developed and strengthened, in the midst of the most fearful exhibitions of moral evil, has been so conducted that they have remained untouched by pollution and criminality

This consolatory reflection tends to elucidate and to give force to scriptural declarations, which bring before the mind the glorious prospect of a remote future, when moral evil, being completely extinguished, shall never reappear. Intelligent beings have been, and still are, receiving the most impressive lessons respecting the Creator's character and purposes, His relations to them and to the universe at large, and their relations to each other, in a position of mingled light and darkness. The knowledge thus painfully gained will be indelibly stamped upon, and become a living consciousness in, untold myriads of created minds. The processes for the acquisition of this knowledge have been and still are of a most diversified nature; but the convictions will be identical in their tendency and effects. I surmise that when the created intelligence of the universe has been suitably disciplined, by the painful processes which are in operation, the wisdom and benevolence of God will train new denizens, of His boundless and ever-expanding dominions, of intellectual and moral life, in a region of holiness and light. It is stated that, under the mediatorial reign of Christ, all things shall be reconciled to God, which I understand to intimate the extinction of moral evil, as that is the only cause of alienation, and without its removal harmony is impossible in the universe. It is also said: 'And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.' This

seems to indicate, that when the measures of discipline and recovery are fully accomplished—when light, holiness, and love are completely diffused throughout the whole extent of intelligent creation—the system of mediation will terminate. The Creator will no longer hide Himself, in the sense of His character and purposes being veiled and obscured through the errors and misconceptions of His creatures; His wisdom, benevolence, and tenderness will shine unclouded; all intellects and hearts will render willing, loving homage; and God shall be ‘all in all.’ Yet I cannot imagine that there will ever be a cessation of creative energy, but rather that it will be displayed with increased vigour, when the dispensation of painful trial and discipline is concluded. I surmise that in the blissful era, when doubt and uncertainty, danger and distress, darkness and depravity will be viewed as a menace and infliction of the past, new orders of beings will be trained in the full light of knowledge and experience, acquired by created intelligence during the stormy periods of graduated instruction in the school of sorrow. The holy angels have been preserved without a stain of pollution, although brought in contact with moral evil, and witnessing the deadly intensity of its action. When moral evil no longer operates to defile, darken, and destroy, a vivid image of its essential features and properties may remain indelibly exposed, not only before those whose memory may reproduce the imperishable records with unerring fidelity, but in the view of

countless myriads, who may be ushered into being amid sights and sounds of light, purity, and love. We have no struggles now against crowned tyranny in England; yet I suppose that, even if no instances of despotism were furnished in other lands, we might still derive an impressive sense of its inconveniences and dangers from the warnings of our past history. We are sometimes entranced beneath the spell of fiction, and so absorbed in ideal passions and sorrows, that for a while we lose the consciousness of the present. The genius of the painter places before us scenes not visited since boyhood, or the features of those we loved in youth; and we find ourselves separated from surrounding objects, and in the midst of bygone years, with their warm feelings, hopes, and fancies. Even without appealing to memory, it has the power of investing with the sense of present reality the loves and hatreds, the sorrows and crimes, of epochs removed from us by rolling centuries. Such analogies may give a slight suggestion as to possibilities of recalling, and clothing with life, the heart-stirring incidents of the past; and we may also add the wondrous vividness of dreams. I picture to myself that all the actors in the fearful dramas of moral evil will be congregated in the world of permanent realities, with their ineffaceable recollections; that the qualities we call genius and eloquence, as well as the marvellous potency of music, poesy, and painting, are but rudiments or shadows of that which is to be; and I venture on the conjecture,



that, in a future life, each one may have the faculty, not only of expressing thoughts and feelings by symbols and resemblances, but of exposing to view the ideas and emotions themselves, in their clearness, force, and intensity. Such reflections enable me to conceive, that moral evil may continue to afford impressive lessons, for the development of the intellectual faculties and moral sensibilities, when its misguiding, debasing, and blighting influences have passed away, never to return.

Our knowledge respecting the spirits that kept not their first estate is still less, I think, than the inferences we may draw from the Bible concerning those who remained upright and holy. There are some obscure intimations that they fell through pride, and also of struggles and conflicts, on which I found the conjectures I am venturing to bring forward. I see no reason for supposing that they were ejected from heaven as a locality, or that they were visited by Divine vengeance. They were created upright, and misused the noble faculties with which they were endowed. The consciousness of possessing immense powers and energies probably engendered arrogance, and a fancied independence of superior control; particularly if their earliest existence was in a position where the visible manifestations of the Creator's presence were withheld, or but faintly discerned. Pride and undue self-reliance, by alienating the thoughts and affections from the Author of their being, might easily awaken the baleful action of selfishness and injustice, especially if some of

their companions were comparatively weak ; or if, though equal in strength, they were endowed with meekness, and with an humble recognition of the Creator's claims to their adoring and loving homage. Under such circumstances the moral qualities of proud and lofty spirits must rapidly have deteriorated, and the balance of their intellectual faculties must have become disturbed. We often see in human nature vast mental powers capable of exploring the most recondite secrets of the physical world, and wondrously sagacious in tracing the ramifications of vice, and of analysing the most hidden recesses of depravity. But, at the same time, there is a film over the moral sense, obscuring its capacity to discern goodness, purity, and conscientiousness, and rendering it totally incapable of perceiving the benevolent attributes of the Divine nature. This analogy affords a feeble illustration of the withering blight which has fallen on the moral qualities of the mighty spirits who, through a blind self-sufficiency, ignored the absolute dependence of creatures on the great Source of light, purity, love, and happiness. I apprehend that they have never seen God 'as He is ;' that they have never discerned His real character and purposes. The growing intellectual and moral vigour of their pristine companions has but tended to inflame their envious malignity, without increasing their capacity to appreciate moral excellence, of which perhaps they have no suitable conception, as is the case with many highly intelligent though depraved men. When feebler races of beings

were brought into existence, and they were permitted to exert their cruel wiles for their destruction, they at once discerned the infantile simplicity of the first denizens of earth, with a mocking audacity of fiendish contempt, and must have exulted at the facility with which they marred the glorious works of the Creator, when, after countless ages of slow development, the goodly structure was completed by the introduction of intellectual and moral life. They doubtless misconstrued the patient reticence of God ; and their success in extending the sway of mental perversity and moral turpitude over this earth, and probably over other regions, has strengthened and aggravated all that was evil in themselves. We are unable to estimate the progression of their depravity, and are not informed whether any counteractives have been applied to mitigate its fearful action. We have no reason to suppose that they have as yet derived any benefits from the processes of mental and moral discipline which are in operation ; and they are probably as incapable of understanding the comprehensive purposes of the Creator, for the universal good of His creatures, as a depraved though intelligent man is of appreciating the potency of moral good in counteracting and vanquishing moral evil. Nevertheless, the conjecture may be permitted, that they have been the subjects of Divine influences to a certain extent, whereby their own corruption and consequent misery have been kept in check. If not, the progression of depravity, in its intense hold and mastery over their natures, must have

been proceeding at a fearful rate since they first yielded to its influence. From the general tone of Scripture I infer that such has not been the case; but that, either some beneficent Divine counteractives have been exercised upon them, or else that there is some check in the constitution of their natures, or in the circumstances in which they are placed, which restrains not only their capacity to do harm to others, but also the progression of their own internal depravity. This inference is strengthened by the passages of Scripture which afford awfully vivid, though momentary, glimpses of a future, apparently extending throughout an immensity of duration, when moral evil will rage with unbridled fury, and when its deadly properties, operation, and consequences will be exhibited with an intensity of horror and anguish far beyond the limits of human conception. Those passages are generally understood as indicating that Divine inflictions will produce the torments of hell. That appears to me an erroneous idea, neither warranted by analogies nor by a due appreciation of scriptural declarations. I believe the horrors of hell—‘the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched’—will not result from the direct inflictions of God, but from the withdrawal of the checks and counteractives which are mercifully exercised during the period of probation. Let a Christian try to imagine what would ensue in his own moral nature, if Divine influences—restraining, guiding, softening, enlightening, purifying—were altogether withdrawn. Let us picture

to ourselves, if possible, the condition of this earth, if those influences of the Holy Spirit which visit all men (to which I shall refer later on) were no longer exercised, and if family instincts and affections were unfelt and unknown. During the period of probation there is scarcely a human being who has not some tie of tenderness, which soothes and softens him; scarcely any one who is totally insensible to the cheering influences of animate and inanimate Nature, or who has not some occupations of an innocent character in which he is interested. Remove him from this earth, and if his spirit is not united to the Creator by the hallowed bonds which can alone support, nourish, animate, and console, what will be the condition of that spirit when deprived of the associations and solaces of this life? Surely we may, by the aid of such reflections as these, acquire some conception of the causes which produce the agonies of hell, and of the awful meaning of the terms 'spiritual death,' 'eternal death.' If the checks and counteractives are altogether withdrawn, by which the dominion of moral evil is restrained, a chaos of depravity must ensue, in which no light, no hope, no alleviation will be experienced. I would here reverently express my conviction, that all the patient reticence of God—the slow, gradual, partial, and sometimes almost imperceptible action of His benign influences—the apparent abandonment of a large portion of creation to the devastating curse of moral evil—the tolerance of untold and unmeasured darkness, error, confusion, ma-

lignity, corruption, and anguish—all these bewildering enigmas are under the unsleeping, vigilant supervision and control of Divine wisdom, rectitude, and goodness. The great Creator ‘doth not afflict willingly and grieve the children of men;’ ‘in all their afflictions He is afflicted;’ ‘His tender mercies are over all His works.’ The spirits of evil are as much His creatures as the sons of light, in their original structure and continued existence. The pangs of the universe, whether affecting guilt or innocence, are sensitively felt by the great Author of intellectual and moral life. Moral evil, with its attendant anguish, will have an end. All things will be gathered together in one in Christ. All things will be reconciled to God by Christ.

We are, I think, permitted and enjoined to use our best efforts to comprehend the course of the Divine administration. Those who ‘regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of His hands,’ are pronounced to be culpable (Isa. v. 12). It is fitting and right to trace the wisdom and beneficence of God in the structure of the material universe, and in the complex organisation of our wondrously blended nature. We may likewise study, with much advantage, the providential government of Humanity, and the accomplishment of wise ends, through the conflicting impulses and diversified motives which prompt individuals and communities. It is no less fitting and beneficial to employ our best exertions for the comprehension of the vast measures in opera-

tion, to secure the permanent welfare of all the intelligent creation, and to construct the complete and glorious cosmos of physical, intellectual, and spiritual life. Our imperfect faculties are often baffled, whether we apply them to the investigation of physical or moral problems. Still we are invited and encouraged to use them with humility and perseverance; and I believe it is the clear duty, as well as privilege, of intelligent men to do so.

The existence of moral evil, as also of physical pain and suffering, has been, as far as I am aware, a source of perplexity to reflecting men in all ages. It is evidently still considered a bewildering mystery, as Mr. Mansel, the author of 'Limits of Religious Thought,' and the writer in the 'Edinburgh Review'—who are doubtless well informed of what has been written on the subject, in modern as well as ancient times—emphatically pronounce it to be so in the passages I have already quoted. It seems to me, as I have endeavoured to show, that if we regard the measures of the Divine government as seeking the welfare of all the intelligent creation, our perplexity will be in a great degree relieved. I feel convinced that the entrance of moral evil has been permitted on good grounds, which we may in some measure discern; and to my mind its existence throws no obscurity on the Divine wisdom, rectitude, and goodness. I have the delightful persuasion that the Creator would have preserved all His creatures from dangers and sufferings, if their faculties and powers could have been suitably developed by

other means, so as to fit them for an immortality of security, happiness, and never-ending progress. Although Christian writers treat the existence of moral evil as an inexplicable mystery, they have never yet considered (as far as I am aware) whether intelligent creatures, springing into being in a state of complete ignorance and inexperience, could be prepared for an immortal existence in a better way than that of exposure to dangers and sufferings. When I reflected on the subject, I was able to conceive of two ways: one of delicate shelter, and the other of exposure, either with partial guards or without. As far as my limited faculties could grasp a topic so vast and difficult, I was unable to perceive how, under the first-named process, their intellectual and emotional capacities and powers could have been exercised and developed, so as fully to bring out their qualities and properties. I think much error and misconception have been produced by a tacit assumption, without due investigation, that a large portion of the intelligent creation has been trained without exposure to risks, pains, and sorrows. The supposition that there was, and always had been, unclouded serenity, moral order, and felicity in certain favoured regions has aggravated the discontent of human minds, when they contemplated the fearful amount of disorder, confusion, and misery to which the race of Adam has been subjected. I believe the declarations of the Sacred Volume do not justify such an assumption. In Jude 6 reference is made to 'the angels which



kept not their first estate ;' from whence, and other passages, I have drawn the inference that all the angelic orders were exposed to trials and dangers, and that some kept their first estate and others did not. The former are called the 'elect' or 'chosen' angels, a term very suggestive, to my mind, of the process employed for their preservation. They must, I think, have passed through sorrows and sufferings, although they were not contaminated by moral evil. I see no reason to suppose that they were separated from the perverse and evil ; and indeed, so far as I can surmise from the hints given in the Bible, their situation at the commencement must, in its substantial features, have been similar to that of the righteous and faithful, such as Enoch and Noah, in the Antediluvian world. They were in the midst of proud and haughty spirits, who probably mocked them, and perhaps oppressed them. They felt themselves ignorant, weak, and inexperienced ; and it may be that their faith was tried by having to rely on an unseen Creator. Gradually their knowledge was enlarged, the manifestations of the Creator's presence became more perceptible, their intellectual and moral strength increased, and they acquired the calm attitude of benevolence and fortitude, while gazing on, and participating in, painful events. They have suffered greatly,\* and must

\* I believe the sufferings of the angels have had a particular intensity, respecting which we can only form imperfect conceptions. They have constantly beheld sin in its naked hideousness, which we seldom do in this life, where so many disguises and false appearances soften hateful realities. I see no reason to suppose that, in the

still continue to suffer ; as it is impossible for holy and benevolent beings to be in the midst of depravity, deceit, and malignity without suffering. 'The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together.' I have no doubt the disclosures of eternity will show that the amount of suffering through which the whole creation is passing will not be greater than is necessary for the accomplishment of the important objects contemplated.

I apprehend that it is indispensable for created intelligence to derive impressive knowledge of the solemn realities of the universe by painful trials and discipline. A created mind, however lofty its innate capacities, must spring into existence devoid of knowledge and experience. The contingencies and liabilities of intellectual and moral agents in their complicated relations to the Creator, and to each other, although clear to the Omniscient, could only become impressively known to His creatures by consciousness, experience, and the observation of actual facts. It was necessary that moral evil should be encountered, understood, and overcome ; otherwise, it would always have lurked as a latent menace against the security of the universe, from which it could only have been preserved by the bonds and fetters of strong moral constraint, which would have im-

invisible world, the evil and the good are separated in the sense of being unconscious of each other's presence and distinctive characteristics ; although a great gulf of uncongeniality and incompatibility divides them. Consequently, all holy and pure natures must continue to be vexed and saddened by spectacles of depravity and misery so long as moral evil exists.

ped the development of the noblest faculties. I do not regard moral evil as a mysterious poison that floats in infinite space, but surmise that it owes its origin to the unavoidable ignorance and inexperience of created beings, and to the untrained and undeveloped condition of their faculties in the infancy of their existence. I apprehend that, for wise and beneficent reasons, the Creator has hidden Himself from all His intelligent creatures in the incipient stages of their career. This early training, at an apparent distance from God, has been bringing out the definite action of self-consciousness, a strong sense of individuality, and the initiatory movements of free will. If intelligent creatures, when they first awakened to thought and emotion, had clearly discerned that they lived and moved and had their being in God, and were absolutely dependent on Him for every moment of sustained vitality, I think the effect would have been overwhelming, so as to extinguish their self-consciousness and sense of individuality, and to restrain the development of their faculties. Some of the most eminent minds, while reflecting on the necessary relations of the Creator to His creatures, have found themselves unable to comprehend the possibility of creatures being so separated from the Creator as to constitute distinct personalities. This problem is too hard for human elucidation ; but a continued series of painful events has been, and still is, affording a practical solution. The very antagonism and rebellion of creatures has implanted such a sense of distinct

individuality that it can never be eradicated. Even if the holy angels were (as I conjecture) guided by restraining influences, in the right use of their intellectual and moral faculties, until increased knowledge and experience rendered an expansion of liberty compatible with their safety, that moral constraint was doubtless exerted with the occult delicacy which is so wondrously manifested in the moral training of Humanity. They were never overpowered with a sense of the Divine presence and action, so as to interfere with the consciousness of individuality and responsibility; although they must soon have recognised that gracious succour was afforded them in their trials. In like manner, weak and timid Christians sometimes experience a degree of moral strength, fortitude, and calmness in the hour of sore trial, far beyond what they could have anticipated from the usual range of their own mental and moral organisation. They feel grateful to God; and yet their self-consciousness and sense of individuality are not disturbed. It may be that the course of events through which angelic orders have passed, has developed great diversities of characteristics in the sons of light, as well as in the spirits of darkness. The language of Scripture seems to indicate innumerable distinctions of that nature. Contrasts of such a kind must tend very forcibly to strengthen the sense of individuality. That effect is produced by the countless varieties in the characteristics of human beings, resulting from differing conditions of physical circumstances, and

from the complex operation of their influences on each other, which are all connected with an inexorable chain of causes and effects, the links of which unite present events with the most remote past, and will extend to the most remote future. When we are brought in contact with human beings whose manners, customs, tastes, opinions, and outward aspect differ altogether from our own, the notion of distinct personalities and separate existences must be far more strongly impressed on us than it could have been by uniformity and congeniality. The speculative possibility of developing distinct personality, inviolable self-consciousness, and a vital and real spontaneity of movement in created beings may always remain a problem too intricate for the human mind to unravel. But it seems to me that, if we intelligently consider the statements of the Bible, and the circumstances of human life, we may perceive that the problem is being solved by a process full of perplexing features, and yet giving us glimpses of suitability to accomplish those objects, which are indispensable for the intellectual and moral elevation of the intelligent universe.

It is interesting and instructive to observe that the test of obedience appointed by the Creator, for the initiatory discipline of our first parents, is called 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil'—not of evil only, but of good and evil. This title is suggestive of the idea which a consideration of other parts of Scripture may confirm, that moral good cannot be fully comprehended and appreciated

by intelligent beings, unless they understand the nature, properties, and tendencies of moral evil. That knowledge may be acquired without being polluted by sin, as is experienced by the holy angels, and those of the human race who die in early infancy; but I apprehend that this important knowledge could not have been obtained if moral evil had not been palpably exhibited. It is worthy of remark that, in this life, human intelligence is exercised, the fancy is awakened and quickened, and the moral sensibilities are brought into lively operation, by varied contrasts, inspiring by turns vivid or tranquil pleasure, pity, awe, terror, repulsion, and loving complacency. There are physical contrasts, as light and darkness, heat and cold, bitter and sweet, beauty and deformity, the radiance of sunshine and the gloom of the storm, the benign placidity and the raging fury of the ocean, the smiling charms of flowery verdure and the bleak desolation of rugged rocks, the cheerful melodies of animate life and the howling lamentations of the elements. There are the contrasts of youth and age, blooming health and haggard sickness, cultivated intelligence and untutored barbarism, gentle mildness and fierce irritation. There are social contrasts of the most striking and affecting character; there are marvellous contrasts between different nations of the same epoch, and between the general features of distinct periods of time. In short, whether we contemplate the habits of different animals, or the varying moods and aspects of inanimate Nature.

whether we consider man in his present or past history, in his physical or moral development, we meet with the most interesting and instructive contrasts, which are well calculated to exercise the powers of reflection and of the imagination, and to move our emotional capacities from the softest to the most intense degree. Would our impressions of light, beauty, comfort, kindness, health, be as vivid as they are, if we had never become acquainted with their opposites? A large proportion of these contrasts, and perhaps almost all those which awaken strong emotions, have been produced by the action of moral evil. The wise, self-restrained, reticent, and benevolent supervision of the Creator has elicited from

the fruit

Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe,

the means of the most important discipline and instruction, for the gradual development of the human faculties and powers.

Moral evil, in its intrinsic essence and tendencies, produces unmitigated perdition and misery. It is as deadly in its effects on a spirit as poison is to a human body. It seems clear that no created power could make it an instrument of good. Nor can any created being, that has fallen under its dominion, free itself from its enslaving and degrading influence. We are led to suppose that the angelic orders were originally endowed with more vigorous intellectual and moral faculties than

the race of Adam ; or, if not, that their spiritual capacities were either untrammelled, or less confined by a physical organisation than our own. Yet we have reason to conclude, from the statements of Scripture, that none of those who fell from their first estate would be able, by their inherent powers, to recover their lost position of holiness and happiness, even if a free pardon were extended to them. The action of moral evil upon them has been of a most deleterious nature ; and, although the painful spectacle has served for the instruction and discipline of the holy angels, increasing misery and darkness have been brought upon themselves. We derive the same conviction when we contemplate the influence of sin upon Humanity. The thoughtful Christian becomes convinced from his own mental consciousness, and from his observation on the scenes around him, that moral evil is a subtle and insidious poison, of intensely noxious potency, blinding the judgment, deadening or perverting the affections, and, if not counteracted, always progressing in its tyrannous ascendancy over the intellect and the heart ; although, in this life, it is mercifully kept in check by the powerful instincts of family affection, and other wholesome impulses. Consequently, it is impossible for any intelligent Christian to suppose, that moral evil can be employed for beneficial objects, except by the wondrous alchemy of Divine influence and supervision. I am very anxious not to incur the charge of representing sin as a trifle, and have earnestly endeavoured to avoid such an imputation.



I repeat my impressive conviction that it is a deadly poison, which blinds and degrades, and must inevitably destroy, all who are under its sway, unless delivered by God Himself. But I am not the less strongly convinced that its entrance into the universe has been permitted by the Creator, in order to realise a greater amount of good, than would have resulted if His intelligent creatures had been carefully sheltered from its approach. Its fearfully virulent and intensely noxious properties may be in some measure understood, when we perceive that it has caused pain and suffering throughout all the intelligent universe, as far as our knowledge extends; and that the Divine Nature has, during unnumbered ages, participated in that suffering. It seems clear to my mind that, in order to make use of this deadly poison for purposes of incalculable utility, the great Creator has assumed a burden of self-sacrifice, unwearied toil, and repugnant labour, which fills the mind with reverential amazement and awe.

The existence of moral evil has an important bearing on the question of Necessity and Free Will. It seems to me that a *régime* of Necessity results naturally, and even inevitably, from the relations which the Creator sustains to His creatures, who must always live and move and have their being in Him. Some of the most eminent minds have acknowledged their inability to perceive how a created and dependent being could possibly be constituted a free agent. Now the entrance of moral evil has established a counter bondage, if I

may so speak. In itself it produces a *régime* of necessity also, of a blinding and degrading character, and intelligent beings are consciously exposed to the action of conflicting forces, whereby free will is germinated. I do not see how mental and moral freedom could have been developed, if all irregularities in thought, emotion, and action had been so checked as to be entirely prevented. In other words, I do not see how free will could have been brought into spontaneous action, if the entrance of moral evil had been forcibly prevented by overwhelming restraint. We might as well expect that children are to learn to walk without risk of falls, as that free will is to be exercised, in a real, effective manner, by creatures who begin their existence without any knowledge, unless they are brought in contact with dangers and contingencies, and learn, by their own observation and experience, what is good and what is not. I surmise that the holy angels were not aware that they were less liable to fall than their companions. Evil was presented to them, and, I suppose, with some attractions; the example and influence of those who went astray urged them in one direction, while Divine influences of an occult nature operated to sustain them. The action of conflicting forces germinated free will in them also. If they had not become acquainted with the radical difference between holiness and depravity, love and malignity, they could not have exercised free will. We have to take into account, that not only the intellectual, but also the emotional, facul-

ties have an important share of influence in the formation of free will. Without knowledge and experience of a diversified character, the former are not much strengthened and enlarged—and knowledge is not to be obtained by rote or by forcible infusion: without dangers, contingencies, sorrows, and sufferings, the latter are not greatly moved. Both, under the Divine supervision, have been actively exercised through the operation of moral evil. I suppose, to the metaphysician, it must always appear an impossibility to free the creation from a *régime* of necessity. But we see that, practically, free will is being developed through the action of conflicting forces, and by the exquisitely delicate influences exercised by the Creator on His creatures; and we are assured that the creature ‘shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.’

The advocates of Necessity and Freedom of the Will have been disputing for ages, without arriving at a definite issue. The one party is strong in speculative reasoning, and the other has a firm hold on the consciousness of mankind. But no one has attempted, I think, to show the co-existence of Necessity and Freedom in effecting the discipline of Humanity. A modern philosopher (Sir W. Hamilton) whose advocacy of Free Will does not strike me as very clear and cogent, seems to have arrived at the conclusion, ‘that liberty and necessity are both incomprehensible, as both beyond the limits of legitimate thought; but that

though the free agency of mankind cannot be speculatively proved, so neither can it be speculatively disproved; while we may claim for it, as a *fact* of real actuality, though of inconceivable possibility, the testimony of consciousness that we are morally free, as we are morally accountable for our actions.' I cannot venture to deal with a problem so transcendental that it has baffled the efforts of the most eminent minds. But I would submit a few reflections, which tend to afford a glimmering of light to my own mind. The expanding action of free will depends in a great degree on knowledge, while ignorance and error necessarily restrain it. I do not think that any creature can exercise the will irrespectively of motives; nor can it emancipate itself, in the act of willing, from the influence of its innate characteristics, implanted by a chain of causes over which it has had no control. In that sense all created beings will for ever remain under a *régime* of necessity, arising from the constitution of things established by the Creator, or shaping themselves gradually under His supervision. If two children have access to a garden, containing a variety of fruits, some of which are of a noxious quality, and one of the children is ignorant of the distinctive properties of the fruits, their position, if allowed unrestricted freedom of selection, will not be equal. If both are ignorant, their selection will be prompted by their innate characteristics, or by some accidental circumstance. If a traveller finds himself in an unknown wilderness, with scarcely perceptible

paths crossing each other in various directions, he may be fully conscious of a capacity to move in any direction he pleases; but his liberty of choice is very different from that of the man who knows that one of the paths leads to safety and comfort, and that the others would conduct him to bleak exposure and starvation. When we say of anyone that he is 'a wiser and a sadder man,' we mean that he has gained knowledge by painful experience, and that he is not so likely to fall into previous errors as he would be if still as ignorant as before that a certain line of conduct has a tendency to produce sorrow and suffering. The process in the formation of his will in the one case will be very different from what it would be in the other. The *régime* of Necessity becomes modified by increased knowledge of a right kind, at least in a practical sense; although, to the metaphysician, it may always appear to be the same system, working with subtle ramifications, so as to conceal the rigour of its action. The untutored savage cowers with servile dread beneath the sway of mighty forces, which the more intelligent man employs to promote his welfare; and while the one is the sport of contingencies over which he has no control, the other is constantly making new discoveries of the restraining and guiding influences which mind may exert upon matter. It is the same in the moral and spiritual world. Our Saviour said, 'Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.' He evidently referred to moral and spiritual truth, in its effect on the

intellect and the heart. The knowledge of physical truth delivers from abject bondage of a certain kind, but may still leave the mind and affections a prey to slavery of the most degrading character. 'Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.' To be really free is to have the intellect enlightened both in regard to the higher and lower departments of knowledge, and the emotional faculties under the sway of Divine love and purity. True freedom consists in mental and moral health, and the proportionate culture and development of every faculty. If we attempt to stimulate the intellectual capacities, and neglect the emotional, or permit the latter to gain an ascendancy, unguided by the suitable control of the former, we become subject to enslaving influences. Created beings will never be free in the sense of self-sustaining independence. They will always live and move and have their being in the Creator. The imagery employed by the Saviour, 'I am the vine, ye are the branches,' will always be applicable. The declaration of the Apostle, 'When I am weak, then am I strong,' indicating an entire reliance on God, contains a sentiment which will endure throughout eternity, giving steadiness and animation to the upward flight of the loftiest intelligences, with a growing expansion of liberty, in its noblest and only true sense. The unguided freedom of a large portion of created beings has produced an inconceivable maze of darkness, confusion, suffering, and bondage. The necessary restraints exerted on the holy angels and the elect of mankind, have been

and still are an important means of effecting the development of their faculties, so as to lead them gradually to the acquisition of the 'glorious liberty of the children of God.' When we contemplate the angelic races, we see the most amazing contrasts in the spiritual natures, which were probably gifted with equal powers and capacities in the beginning of their career. On the one side, we behold elevated intelligence, constantly expanding its well-balanced faculties of perception, comparison, and accurate comprehension, because the moral qualities have been cultivated in a proportionate degree. On the other hand, we discern mighty powers of intellect, capable of penetrating into the most subtle intricacies of the minor departments of knowledge, but totally unqualified to ascend to elevated regions of thought and emotion, by reason of the withered condition of the moral qualities. Such reflections tend to rebuke the arrogant pretensions of human reason to inherent vigour and fancied independence; and also exhibit the folly of seeking the attainment of mental liberty, apart from the proportionate culture of the moral qualities.

The influences of the Holy Spirit are a most important and indispensable means in carrying on the discipline, enlightenment, and purification of Humanity. If that blessed and all-powerful Agent had not condescended to undertake the great work of illumination and sanctification, the effects of moral evil on the race of Adam must have been

the same as on the spirits of darkness. That forbidden tree, so fatally connected with man's disobedience and woe, would not have been called 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,' but of evil only. In other words, the effects of sin on the children of men would have been simply disastrous, blighting, and desolating, as they have hitherto been on the rebel angels, so far as we have any cognisance of their condition.

I believe the influences of the Holy Spirit act upon all men ; and always with the benevolent contemplation of ultimate results of universal good. Those kindly, unwearied, patient operations visit all the members of the human family, whether they live in Christian or in heathen countries. But there is a great difference between the ordinary action of the Holy Spirit and the peculiar influences which are exercised in regeneration. The former are not, I think, on the spirit itself, but on the physical organisation of the mind, and on the most delicate fibres of the material frame ; that which some persons call the soul being the finer and more ethereal portion of the corporeal structure, the connecting medium between the body and spirit. Thus the tablet of memory is gently but vividly touched, and the sinner is suddenly arrested by the reminiscence of some bygone incident, the tearful pleadings of maternal love, a sister's gentle tenderness, or some other affecting circumstance. There is a warning agitation of the nervous system ; 'a horror of great darkness' checks the criminal purpose, and affords



time for reflection. The higher faculties of judgment, comparison, benevolence, are sometimes strengthened, and rendered more lucid and effective; the family instincts are softened and made more tender; the emotions of gratitude and friendship are intensified; the conscience, or moral sense, is quickened, and the dread of a great judgment to come is employed as a counteractive. By such means many are saved in the hour of temptation, and preserved from ruin. The principle of application seems to be, that those who receive such beneficent restraining influences with docility will enjoy them in a fuller measure, and will proceed with increasing strength and security in the affairs of this life; while those who disregard and reject them will become less and less sensible of their monitory sway. I believe, also, that those who allow their minds and hearts to be guided by the gentle and hallowed admonitions, which indicate the right course of thought, feeling, and conduct in earthly relations, almost invariably receive the higher influences, which awaken the spirit's perceptions and emotions, in regard to its relations towards the Creator. The beneficent process is conducted with such reticence and delicacy as not to overpower the movements of free will, but to assist in its development. I will here add, that I think there are reasons for supposing, from the statements of the Bible, that the human race are indebted to Divine influences and suggestions for luminous ideas which suddenly present themselves to individual minds, in relation

to science in general, leading to important and valuable improvements, in correct knowledge and its practical application.

The extraordinary influences are, I think, on the spirit itself, and are equivalent to a new birth, inasmuch as the germ of spiritual life is implanted, where previously torpor and paralysation existed. I apprehend that the human spirit is brought in direct contact with the Divine Spirit, without the intervention of the physical organisation, and the result is of a character which is entirely unknown to the natural man. 'The natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto Him: neither can He know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' (1 Cor. ii. 14.) There is a spiritual discernment of God's goodness and love, of His holiness and truth, which cannot be described, and the effect of which on the intellectual and emotional faculties cannot be conceived by those who have never experienced it. In many cases the recipients of those hallowed and ineffable influences are unlettered and ignorant persons; while in others they are possessed of fair intellectual powers, and sometimes of the highest capacities and culture. On some is bestowed the incalculable blessing of receiving those influences in early life; while the gracious visitation comes to others in more advanced years, when the character is formed, and when, perhaps, mental darkness and error, as well as much depravity in feeling and practice, have become strongly impressed on the individual. In

some cases the process resembles the moving of the Great Spirit on a fearful mass of darkness and of chaotic elements, and the spiritual apprehension of the moral attributes of God produces terror, dismay, and even a temporary state of despair. In other instances the lovely and legitimate effects soon follow, which are enumerated by the Apostle as 'the fruits of the Spirit.' Although regeneration is a spiritual process, its consequences extend to the whole physical organisation; and the more so as those who are subject to this pre-eminently important influence also participate in the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit. The cleansing of the thoughts, feelings, and conduct is the invariable effect of this beneficent process, and the only legitimate evidence of its existence. Sanctification always accompanies regeneration, because one of the chief designs of regeneration is to produce sanctification. The principal medium in carrying out these important processes is the vivid application, to the intellect and conscience, of the word of God, which is emphatically called 'the sword of the Spirit' (Ephes. vi. 17), enlightening the understanding in regard to the character of God and the way of salvation. Among the extraordinary influences, we must include Inspiration, and the action of the Holy Spirit on the human nature of the Saviour.

When I endeavour to contemplate the operation of Divine influences upon Humanity, I am profoundly impressed by the touching proofs of unwearied patience, benignity, gentle firmness,

indomitable perseverance, and self-restraint which are manifested. I think Christians ought to recognise and reflect upon 'the love of the Spirit' (Rom. xv. 30) much more than they do. There is the painful spectacle, during unnumbered ages, before the Divine inspection (an inspection of the most minute kind) of all that is most abhorrent to the purity, equity, tenderness, and elevated intelligence of the Deity. There are the unwearied, unceasing, self-limited efforts and strivings of the Holy Spirit with the gross imbecility, darkness, coldness, ingratitude, meanness, ferocity, injustice, and sensuality of sinners. I say self-limited, because it appears evident to my mind, that the Holy Spirit restrains His own efforts and action, upon certain enlightened and comprehensive principles, and, if I might so speak, does violence to His feelings of compassion and benevolence. He beholds the incipient stages which are conducting the artlessness of childhood into the meshes of depravity; He witnesses the subtle snares which are luring incautious innocence to destruction. But He interferes not with the inexorable law of causes and consequences; the links in the chain of interweaving destinies are not displaced by him—even though scenes of horror, crime, and suffering may be rapidly drawing near. He represses His feelings of tenderness and pity, and oftentimes permits corruption, degradation, and cruelty to spread like a noisome pestilence over the fairest portions of the earth, with scarcely any counteractive checks. This course of proceeding appears strange and

mysterious, until we discern a great purpose of universal good. We are then able to imagine, that it may be wise and benevolent to permit the most fearful and revolting exhibition of the action and effects of sin, in order to accomplish its entire and radical extirpation. It is deeply affecting to reflect upon the firm and patient adherence to those principles of self-restraint, on the part of the benign Mitigator of human woes and human crimes, and to consider the amount of suffering which that self-restraint must impose on the tenderness of the Divine Nature. I wish to express myself on this elevated topic with the deep reverence and admiring love which such reflections are calculated to inspire. I know full well that a human mind can only have vague and imperfect conceptions in regard to that great Being to whom the past, the present, and the future are open and clear at one view, and by whom ultimate results are as distinctly realised as if they were present facts. Nevertheless I am convinced, from the statements of the Bible, that the fearful dramas of evil occasion much pain and suffering to the Creator, which are endured in order to accomplish the welfare of the universe. If we regard the subject from another point of view, and have recourse to earthly analogies of another order, we become increasingly impressed with the marvellous character of those gracious and condescending operations. When an earthly sovereign bestows much personal attention on the preparation and enactment of benevolent measures for the good of

his subjects, our admiration is excited, even though the application of those measures may be confided to subordinates. What, then, should be our feelings when we behold the great Sovereign of the universe, not only carefully preparing and digesting the most important remedial measures, but assuming the burden of sacrifice and suffering which they involve, and carrying out their practical application with an amount of patient endurance, minute effort, and (if we may so speak) at the expense of trouble and annoyance, which appear beyond the bounds of credibility? We are informed that the Son of God, 'for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame.' May we not also say, while contemplating another department of the wondrous scheme of mercy, that the Holy Spirit, for the joy in prospect of bringing light, happiness, and love out of darkness, misery, and malignity, submits to an inconceivable degree of repugnant labour, in undertaking the gradual enlightenment and sanctification of untold myriads of imbecile and depraved creatures?

Conscience, or the sense of right and wrong, is an important instrument in the discipline of Humanity. It appears to be partly instinctive, and to be possessed by all men in some degree. Its universal existence seems to be recognised by the Apostle Paul in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. I think it resides in the brain, and is intimately connected with the intellectual faculties

and moral sensibilities. It may be likened to a well-meaning, but inadequately instructed, judge; and its capacity to form correct appreciations depends on the degree of light which illuminates the understanding. Inaccurate opinions must necessarily pervert its decisions in some measure; and if a man is not responsible for his belief (as some allege), I do not see how he can be held accountable for the false estimates of conscience arising from an erroneous belief. The conscience of most Protestants allows them to eat meat on Friday with the utmost serenity, but is apt to reproach them for taking the name of God in vain. But I have remarked that sincere Catholics, although acutely sensitive in regard to any infraction of ceremonial observances, frequently, and even habitually, transgress in the latter respect, without any apparent consciousness of wrong. I suppose a Thug entertains a complacent feeling of self-approbation while enumerating the victims offered by him to his sanguinary deity; and an officer of the Inquisition doubtless regarded as praiseworthy his own participation in executing the cruel mandates of that fearful institution. Such hideous superstition and mistaken ferocity shock our moral sensibilities; yet most of us contemplate with serene acquiescence the fact that officers and soldiers (many of them well-meaning and kind-hearted, and some professing to be religious) are under an engagement to perpetrate slaughter at the word of command, irrespective of any reference to the principles of justice and

benevolence. It is instructive to notice how strangely the consciences of men operate in regard to pecuniary transactions. I allude to many who are intelligent, and who appear to be actuated by a desire to do what is right. They reprobate certain actions, which are universally pronounced to be dishonest. But they practise others which, in the estimation of impartial observers, are equally opposed to the principles of justice and equity. It is the same with theories in regard to the dictates of benevolence, and the fulfilment of mutual obligations. In one age, pious men hold slaves with no compunctious reproaches of conscience. In another age, that hateful institution is justly regarded as inconsistent with the principles of Christianity.

The appreciations of conscience are also greatly influenced by the innate characteristics. The stern man may be alive to the claims of justice, but remains insensible to the pleadings of softer emotions ; while the amiable man becomes uneasy when conscious of having violated the law of kindness. The differing standards of right and wrong which are applied to combined political action, and to individual conduct in private life, tend to confuse the appreciations of conscience. I am convinced that a statesman never really benefits his country, by condescending to employ the weapons of injustice, sophistry, and corruption ; although he may thereby be serving the more ignoble ends of party. So also, I think, it can be held as a sound maxim, that the triumph of truth and



justice in judicial proceedings is never advanced by chicanery and deceit.

It seems to me that the salutary action and the progressive development and influence of conscience are much impeded by erroneous statements and half-veiled insinuations, which are put forth in various departments of human investigation and research. As there is a much larger number of readers in the community than formerly, and the greater part content themselves with a superficial degree of examination and reflection, the mischiefs occasioned by such fallacious statements are proportionately greater. Many physiologists express themselves as if the processes of thought and volition were altogether physical, and nothing else; instead of regarding the physical organisation of the brain as the medium through which an immaterial principle or spirit thinks and wills. According to such theories, as far as I am able to understand their scope and tendency, a human being is merely the collective result of the cerebral nervous and muscular organisation in a corporeal structure. His perceptions, ideas, volitions, emotions, and acts are irresistibly prompted by conflicting and mutually aiding forces within him, being also modified and impelled by external influences apart from him, but acting on him. The notion of responsibility, comparative merits and demerits, virtue and vice, fades away, and would be altogether extinguished, if it were possible entirely to suppress the indestructible monitor within. Then we have collectors of statistics (a very valuable

occupation if conducted with care and accuracy), and some of them, instead of drawing important lessons from their researches, tending to illustrate the solemn operation of the unbending law of causes and consequences, derive conclusions in favour of a system of fatality, which imperatively exacts a certain number of murders, suicides, acts of violence and dishonesty, as well as other crimes, within a given period of time. This mysterious and malevolent power displays equally unrelenting rigour in completing its periodical list of doomed victims to direful casualties, producing concussions and explosions, dislocations of limbs, varied tortures, and death. Now I venture to submit that the lessons to be derived from an intelligent classification of such painful facts may be altogether of a different order. I believe that, if we could have complete and accurate statistics of vice and crime, as well as of fatal accidents, in our own day and in past times, and could trace minute details and causes, we should find an increase or diminution according to the intellectual and moral condition of the age. I believe a thoughtful study of the records of human follies, crimes, and sufferings would have the effect of stimulating and encouraging those who seek to diffuse correct views in the higher and lower departments of knowledge. Let men have just thoughts and conceptions respecting God, His character and designs; let them think aright concerning their relations to Him, and to each other, and the action of conscience will become

clearer and stronger. Let them also be instructed in regard to the physical laws, so as to understand the dangers to which they are exposed, and the means of avoiding and counteracting them. Such intelligent appreciations, added to an increased sense of responsibility from salutary moral influences, would speedily modify the catalogue of horrors, which seem at present to be ascribed by some to implacable Fate. There are also philosophical critics on history, who are strengthening those fatalistic notions, instead of aiding in the great work of human enlightenment and moral progress. I am compelled to add my conviction, that systematic theology exercises very little effective influence in combating such mischievous and demoralising sentiments, on account of its own serious misconceptions concerning the most important topics of human investigation.

When we take into view the varying and imperfect appreciations of the monitor that has been graciously implanted in human breasts, we are naturally led to enquire, How are human consciences to be enlightened? Some thoughts occurred to me on this point while reading an interesting article in the '*Revue des Deux Mondes*' for October 15, 1868. It is on '*The Moral Unity of the Human Race*,' by M. Paul Janet. He endeavours to prove that there is a moral unity among all people in great essentials. I think this idea is sanctioned by the words of Inspiration. In Rom. ii. 14, 15, it is said: '*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things con-*

tained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the law written in their hearts.' He says the moral condition of savages is seldom correctly represented by travellers, who notice differences rather than resemblances, and who are often viewed with suspicion and with hostile feelings by the people they visit, and therefore do not generally see them under a favourable aspect. He affords evidence, from the narrations of Mungo Park and Dr. Livingstone, that industry, perseverance, kindness, justice, and other important qualities are understood and appreciated by the negro races. He even adduces some testimony to the existence of good and noble sentiments among the savages of Australia. After giving numerous extracts from Hindoo, Buddhist, and Chinese literature, indicating elevated views on moral points, he criticises a work, by an English Positivist, Mr. Alex. Bain, on the Emotions and the Will. Mr. Bain denies that there is a moral standard which the collective mind of Humanity recognises, although he admits that there is a feeling of approbation and disapprobation, in regard to actions and sentiments, which is generally found in human breasts. M. Janet thinks this instinctive approbation and disapprobation afford evidence that we carry an ideal standard within us, which is more or less perfect according to our mental and moral culture. Mr. Bain applies the theory of Darwin to this question, and says that, in the struggle of races, those who best

understand and carry out great moral principles make the most progress ; and those races disappear who do not comprehend the elementary principles of morality, such as respect for human life and certain notions about property. M. Janet justly remarks that the essential laws of morality may be observed, amid great diversities of customs and habits. He says it is an error of many philosophers, and among them of Montaigne and Pascal, to suppose that diversities arise from caprice and fantasy. On that point I cordially agree with M. Janet, and believe that the longing and striving for uniformity, in opinions, customs, and usages, which many people cherish, and which the Church of Rome has always sought to enforce in regard to religion, would, if carried into effect, check the progress of the human race, which indeed has constantly been impeded by restrictions in that direction. Diversities of habits, modes of thought, feelings, and opinions bring out the distinctive features and characteristics of Humanity, and are building up its full stature. They have been nurtured and strengthened, for many ages, by separation, mistrust, and hostility. But as friendly intercourse between nations increases, as well as freedom of thought and action, the good and the evil in each will become better understood by contrast ; errors and defects will be corrected, and the capacities and sensibilities of all will be enlarged and expanded. The existence of numerous religious sects is, I think, unavoidable and desirable, as there can be no progress in the

movements of the intellect, on an assumed or compulsory basis of finality and uniformity. Even the publication of what are called infidel sentiments has its uses, in rectifying narrow-minded notions among those who consider themselves the friends of religion. The Sadducees were, in some respects, the free-thinkers in the Jewish community. I do not find that the Saviour spoke of them with severity, although He denounced the Pharisees, (the self-styled orthodox teachers) with vehement earnestness. I presume M. Janet belongs to the Spiritualistic School, which (in France) professes to unfold religious and moral sentiments, without recognising the Divine authority of the Bible. He justly says that progress in morality must be founded on a clear perception of the dignity of human nature, and of the bonds of fraternity which unite all men. Yet he makes no reference to the chief, and I suppose I may say the only, source from which those ideas have been derived. What knowledge had the Greeks and Romans on those two important points? What notions do we find concerning them among the Oriental nations, or any of the savage tribes? What conceptions should we have respecting them at the present day if unenlightened by Revelation? Max Müller justly remarks, in 'Science of Language,' that 'the word barbarian was struck out of the dictionary of mankind, . . . the right of all nations of the world to be classed as members of one genus or kind was recognised' under the teachings of Christianity, and not till then. When the Son of

God 'was made flesh, and dwelt among us,' He raised the dignity of human nature to a height beyond the possible conceptions of philosophy, which contemplates Humanity under an aspect presenting far more of degradation than of dignity until Revelation opens new views upon the subject.

We must still return to the enquiry, How are human consciences to be enlightened? I do not see that either M. Janet or Mr. Bain have given any satisfactory reply. Aristotle seems to have had some discernment of the process when he said, 'The virtuous man is the measure of good and evil.' Every man, however lowly his condition, may assist in this noble work, by honesty, truthfulness, fidelity, justice, kindness, self-denial. Every pious man may shed light around him, if he does justly, loves mercy, and walks humbly with his God. (Micah vi. 8.) I think our Saviour referred to this beneficent process when He said, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' There may be no luminous standard, visible as the radiance of the sun, to the collective eye of Humanity; but there are little lights scattered here and there amid thick darkness, and even found in heathen lands; and, as they increase, so are human perceptions of essential differences extended, and the boundary lines between good and evil become more clearly defined. The great Fountain of Light can only be appreciated by those who seek it in the pages of revelation. Yet even those who slight and neglect this

hallowed source of wisdom and knowledge are benefited by its reflected rays; as is the case with M. Janet, and with all those who profess the principles of Rationalism, Positivism, and Spiritualism. When 'a new continent in the moral globe was discovered' by the precepts and example of the Saviour, the duty of doing good, which was before unknown and scarcely dreamt of, was so vividly exhibited that it has gradually become impressed on the mind of the community, and constitutes an essential feature of modern civilisation. Rationalists and Positivists recognise its claims, although they ignore the way in which it was made known. The Saviour left us an example that we should follow His steps, and when any man is swayed by the exhortation of St. Paul, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,' his life is rendered luminous, and the consciences of those who see and know him become enlightened; because all men, whether civilised or savage, can appreciate kindness, truth, integrity, self-denial, in their genuine manifestations; and the contrast between those qualities and such as differ essentially from them, as well as those which usurp their titles falsely, enlightens the consciences of men. They who return good for evil—who manifest a meek, enduring, forgiving spirit—who conquer evil with good—such benignant, tender lights produce a wondrous effect on poor erring Humanity.

It seems to me, that the great principle in



operation for the discipline of mankind practically deals with the race of Adam, as responsible in its collective capacity ; and with individuals as participating in that widely extending responsibility and culpability, even though their personal condition and circumstances may seem to exonerate them from a share in that responsibility. This principle, when superficially viewed, appears extremely harsh ; but if examined with intelligent scrutiny it will, I think, be found admirably adapted to promote the great objects of comprehensive benevolence which are indicated in the Bible. Whether angelic natures were introduced into existence as isolated individualities, or were and are united by ties of mutual influence and dependence, we do not know. It seems evident however, that their relative situation has never resembled the position created by the interweaving destinies which connect the members of the human family from age to age, and throughout all time. We are apt to be oppressed by the idea of undue rigour, and even of injustice, when we endeavour to trace the chain of mutual influences, by the operation of which a sinner entails sorrows and ills on his own kindred and others, who were innocent of his fault. We are prone to feel misgivings when we behold the sad fruits of an error, a folly, a vice, or a crime, sometimes observable through many generations, and not unfrequently resembling a grain of mustard seed, in the wondrous multiplication of fatal results which overtake the innocent on account of the evil conduct of the

guilty. It seems to us disproportionate when we see that individuals may, by an act of carelessness, or of scarcely perceptible culpability, bring upon themselves a life of suffering and of shame; and we are greatly shocked when we behold writhing innocence vainly striving to be freed from ghastly ills of body or of mind, transmitted by the misconduct of parents, and even of remote ancestors. Such spectacles as these have produced murmuring and discontent; and even when they have been contemplated with pious reverence, it has been mingled with an anxious and uneasy sense of mystery and awe. Yet it appears to me that, when we carefully study the subject, in connection with the elucidations of the Sacred Volume, we may clearly see, in the midst of the sadness and the gloom, the regulation of a Mind of the most comprehensive wisdom and benevolence. We find physical and moral sufferings in the shape of diseases—mental perversity and insanity—social ills of various classes, and other frightful consequences entailed by parents on their children, and by one generation on its successors. We find that thoughtlessness, selfish indulgence, and deliberate malignity on the part of some, often blight the lives of others who appeared undeserving of such a fate. By this inexorable chain of causes and consequences, and of mutual influences, the real character and properties of moral evil are being manifested in a far stronger and more impressive manner than could otherwise have been done, in beings constituted as we are. The

study of this subject, which ought to be much more promoted and enforced by preachers than it is, might be made a powerful instrument in developing reflections of the highest order, and in restraining the impetuosity of ill-regulated passions. Generous emotions, which are more lively and efficacious in youth than in maturer age, might, I think, be appealed to with some effect, as also the strongly implanted instincts of family affection. By exhibiting the sad pictures of grief, misery, and degradation, resulting from actions which only appeared slightly culpable in their incipient aspect, a stern and impressive emphasis might be added to the solemn admonition : ‘Stand in awe and sin not!’ Our Saviour said that for every idle word we must give account in the Day of Judgment. Are not facts constantly teaching us, when we reflect with earnest intelligence, what a moral responsibility is exacted for our words, in their consequences, immediate and remote? Do we not see what estrangement of friendship—what bitterness, mutual distrust, and enmity—what injury to reputation and character, are occasioned by heedless, as well as deceitful and malignant language? So with our thoughts, desires, and intentions, which are the germs of action; and with our habits, which either impel us with almost resistless tyranny, or restrain us by the gentle regulations of order—does not reflection teach us the important influence they exert on ourselves and others? I believe this all-pervading law, of mutual dependence and influence for good and

evil, when intelligently appreciated, will yet do much for the improvement and elevation of the human race in this life ; and that its solemn and affecting lessons are indelibly recorded for the instruction of created intelligence throughout the countless ages of eternity. In the system of the universe, which displays the unrelenting operation of causes and consequences, mysteriously blending with the incipient efforts of free will, we are called upon to behold how much one man can injure others, and how much one man, under the Divine blessing, which is given freely, may benefit others. We are called upon to trace, with enlightened scrutiny, the course and consequences of individual, as well as collective, guilt and folly, in a vast catalogue of diseases, mental and physical, and in a fearful accumulation of suffering, darkness, and depravity, sometimes lasting for ages. Can we not imagine that, if men studied carefully and seriously pondered on the solemn truth, that their conduct, their words and sentiments, affect others as well as themselves for weal and woe, and may occasion much future suffering and degradation to those in whose welfare they feel a deep interest, such reflections would have a very salutary effect on their mental and moral qualities ? Can we not imagine that the contemplation of the course and effects of sin, if clearly and impressively unfolded, and indelibly recorded in the world of realities, will have the most important conservative influence over those who are gradually delivered from the bondage of corruption ? Does

not the whole system tend to exhibit the links which connect the destinies of sire and son, of rich and poor, of one generation with its predecessors and successors? Can we conceive of any system so well qualified to awaken and quicken an intelligent sense of individual and collective responsibility, or to display so effectually and impressively the deadly properties of moral evil? If there is so much carelessness and thoughtlessness still existing among the most enlightened Christian communities, in regard to the fatally multiplying and expansive power of the seeds of evil, whether spread abroad and diffused by idle words and heedless actions, or by speech and conduct which appears more palpably invested with a poisonous tendency, it is, I think, owing, in a great degree, to the want of clear and earnest exhibitions, by the ministers of religion, of the relations of man to man, and of man to his Maker.

It appears to me that the important process of discipline, to which I am now referring, has been greatly distorted by theologians, who have represented it as bringing hopeless destruction upon a large portion of created intelligence, instead of regarding its operation as working out universal good. In consequence of this perversion, they have so obstructed its salutary influence upon human thought, that it has become as repulsive as the theological interpretations of Scripture concerning election and the eternal destinies of sinners; and its repulsive aspect causes the human intellect to shrink from its contemplation. All the systems

of doctrine held by those who are called orthodox Christians, have concurred in discouraging the struggles of Humanity against moral evil, by representing the contest as hopeless except to a small portion, and its sway perpetual over the rest. I do not mean to say that it was their design to produce this effect, but feel convinced that the tendency of their teaching is demoralising, particularly of Calvinistic divines. Most of them have sneered at and depreciated human virtues, if not produced by the influence which they call grace, ignoring the important fact, that the ordinary influences of the Holy Spirit, which apparently visit all men, have an effective share in calling forth the feelings of friendship, affection, gratitude, integrity, self-denial, in those who are not spiritually awakened. Many a man, although destitute of spiritual life, has a struggle in his breast between opposing principles and feelings; and if justice, truth, rectitude, kindness triumph, all good men should rejoice, and not despise such partial conquests of good over evil. How do we know that those triumphs are not often due to the gentle, delicate admonitions of the Holy Spirit, and what warrant have we for not considering such kindly influences as a work of grace, of a minor, though still very important, nature? I believe this strange depreciation of partial good arises from the persuasion that it leads to no results of permanent benefit to the individual, but is soon followed by everlasting misery, despair, and endless depravity. But if theologians

thought that every victory over moral evil, even if gained by those who are not spiritually awakened, is part of a great process of comprehensive benevolence, carried on under Divine supervision, and having in view the deliverance of all the intelligent creation from the bondage of corruption, their appreciations of human virtues would be different. I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of human virtues, as in many cases they are owing simply to innate characteristics and physical temperament; and are good in the same sense as the mildness of a sheep, or the gentleness of a dove. But, in some instances, they may justly be regarded as portions of the great work which is being carried on, having ramifications which extend far beyond the narrow notions of theologians. Some of these have gone so far as to say that it is an aggravation of a man's neglect of God, almost amounting to an insult, if he is a kind and affectionate husband and father, a true friend, a good citizen, and deals justly, charitably, and compassionately with his fellow-men. In short, from their mode of expressing themselves, one must almost infer, that if a man is not spiritually united to God, it would be better for him to be vicious and criminal than virtuous. Yet, all this while, they are representing God in such a way that it is difficult, if not impossible, for men to love Him; and they themselves admit (at least the Calvinistic divines) that none are or can possibly be spiritually united to God, except those who are chosen and called, and on whom are bestowed those special

influences of the Holy Spirit which they call grace. Can such a style of teaching be said to encourage men to strive against moral evil?

The representations made by Calvinistic divines in regard to comparative guilt are bewildering and, I believe, erroneous and demoralising. I suppose that, among the modern exponents of the views of Calvin, none are entitled to exercise a greater degree of authority than President Edwards and Dr. Chalmers. The former lays down the principle, 'that man is blamable for his wrong moral dispositions, in whatever way those dispositions may have been originated; and that the moral character of the disposition or the act, the virtuousness or viciousness thereof, do not lie in their cause, but in their nature; that, however caused, they are, if evil, the rightful objects of condemnation and punishment.' I think this principle, if applied in a judicial sense, is not in accordance with Scripture, and that it is disproved by facts. If a child is born with a disorganised brain, and is an idiot or maniac from early infancy through life; and if that child manifests cunning, deceit, greediness, sensuality, and malignity, accompanied by corresponding actions in so far as opportunities are afforded, we should discern, in such a case, the active operation of moral evil, but I doubt if the sternest Calvinist would pronounce that human being to be really blamable. A large proportion of the human race, although not considered idiots or insane, are born with an unfavourable adjustment of mental and moral faculties, even if



tried by an earthly standard. Many of them have a frightful preponderance of innate vicious propensities, and, in a multiplicity of cases, all the influences around them, from childhood, foster rather than check or correct. I believe the great Sovereign of the universe weighs the guiltiness of mankind on very different principles from those laid down by theologians. But although, in a judicial sense, the culpability of individuals is estimated with an equitable consideration of innate characteristics and surrounding circumstances, the principle of discipline to which I have referred deals with all, as participating in the collective responsibility of the human race. The maniac is practically treated in this life as if he were a responsible agent. If he transgresses the physical laws, he suffers as acutely as one in possession of a sound mind. Fire burns him, water drowns him, diseases torment him. If, in connection with insanity, he has innate characteristics, derived from his parents, which produce envy, malignity, and other hateful passions, his tortures are perhaps even greater than those of a person with similar characteristics, but whose mind is more sound. I believe the principle in operation, as unfolded by Scripture and illustrated by facts, is, that moral evil, whether implanted by transmission from parents, and by the irresistible influence of surrounding circumstances, or voluntarily embraced, with a greater freedom of choice—whether attended with a scarcely perceptible or a larger degree of culpability—always brings degradation and misery,

and must continue to degrade and torment, both in this life and the next, until the individual is delivered from its sway.

Edwards subordinates the imputation of guilt derived from Adam to the corruption derived from Adam. He conceives that the guilt which rests upon us is not the guilt of Adam's act of disobedience, but the guilt of our own proneness to disobey; which proneness, however, we inherit, as the corrupt children of a corrupt parentage. Dr. Chalmers, in his '*Institutes of Theology*,' advocates the full extent of imputation. He says that he was at first inclined to adopt the modified view of Edwards in regard to imputation. But, to use his own words, 'It is the parallelism which the Scripture affirms, between the imputation of Adam's guilt and the imputation of Christ's righteousness, which has broken up this illusion, as I now regard it to be. . . If the believer, or the man who is saved by Christ, is thus taken into favour, in virtue of a direct part or interest in the merit of his great Head, the Mediator of the New Covenant — then, to maintain and complete the parallelism between the first and second Adam, the man who is not a believer, and lost in Adam, is an outcast from the Divine favour, in virtue of a direct part and interest in the guilt of him whom God has been pleased to deal with as the representative of all his posterity.' It is evident to my mind, that such reasonings and interpretations are shaped and moulded by the belief that only a part of the intelligent universe will be delivered

from moral evil, and that the rest will remain for ever in a state of depravity and misery. That belief, if sound, requires to be supported by reasonings of that nature, which naturally throw a shadow of the darkest gloom over the parallelism in the fifth chapter of Romans. Under the influence of that belief, highly intelligent minds have been led to assumptions and conclusions which, I think, cannot easily be reconciled with the dictates of common sense. A remarkable instance occurs in the following passage by Dr. Chalmers: 'Such is our real moral estimate of the degrees or differences, in point of criminality, between two men, presented with the same opportunities and temptations to some given delinquency, of whom you could only say, respecting the first, that there was the chance of his committing the crime at some time; and of the second, that there was the certainty of his committing the crime at all times. This very certainty, so far from annulling his criminality, marks him out as the most thorough and determined reprobate of the two; nor does it alter the case, although the certainty were translated into language, and denominated by such terms as necessity, irresistible necessity, irresistible force. . . Even though told of this sinfulness, that it is owing to the sinfulness of parents, transmitted by a physiological law, which as much ensured that there should be a descent of the same human depravity from father to son as there is of the same human form, this does not lessen in our estimation the hatefulness, and neither does it extinguish,

and we think it does not even extenuate, our sense of the guilt which attaches to the wicked and wrong doings that have been thus germinated.' This appears to me a monstrous proposition, and yet it is brought forward by a mind of high intelligence. I think Dr. Chalmers never could have entertained it, if he had not believed that the Sovereign of the universe was weighing human guilt on such principles. He therefore arrived at the loyal conclusion that it must be right, and boldly avowed his adherence to it. I suppose very few persons of fair intelligence, the healthy play of whose faculties has not been cramped and paralysed by the study of systematic theology, will agree in such an estimate of comparative guilt. A reference to the action of insanity assists my own mind in discerning its fallacy. I imagine a maniac with strong impulses of malignity and sensuality, 'transmitted by a physiological law,' and aggravated by insanity; and I imagine a man with ordinary faculties of intellect, but very depraved. I may feel certain that the former will commit fearful acts of atrocity, whenever the opportunity is presented, and yet hesitate to impute culpability. I may discern counteractive influences of prudence and calculation in the mind of the latter, restraining his evil conduct, and yet entertain no doubt of his guilt. I think the erroneous nature of the foregoing estimate may be shown, without any reference to insanity. Acts of violence by a man of strong passions and fierce impulses, even though frequent, are viewed with more leniency by persons

of sense, than single acts of a similar nature committed by one of calm temperament, in whom the reflective organs are more developed. I may here remark, that while Dr. Chalmers, in contemplating the parallelism between Christ and Adam, sees a principle of widely extending condemnation, which in another part of his work he admits to be dark and mysterious to the human mind, the language of the Apostle contains nothing gloomy, but unfolds the most cheering prospects of free and unrestricted goodness.

I derive strong convictions against the doctrine that the sin of Adam was imputed to his descendants, from reflections on the constitution of human nature. I have already endeavoured to draw an argument from the relations between the body and the spirit, in support of my fourth proposition; but must extend my observations respecting our blended organisation, in illustration of the topic now under consideration. It seems indisputable, from the declarations of Scripture, that we have a physical nature, and an immaterial principle which we call the spirit; and that, although indissolubly united in this life, and constituting the man, they are distinct, and may be separated. We have the passage in the Old Testament, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it;' and that in the New Testament, 'absent from the body, present with the Lord.' The idea seems to be clearly put forth, in various passages of the Sacred Volume, that the spirit is the nobler portion of

Humanity, and that the bodies in this life are of a grosser character than those with which redeemed spirits will be united in a future state. It is said, 'He shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body;' and in another place, 'It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.' It appears no less clear that from our parents we derive our physical nature, and that it is a corrupt one. But, so far as I am able to apprehend the subject, we have no reason to suppose that the spirit which is placed in the body of a new-born infant is corrupt, or that it is in any sense derived from the parents. Dr. Pusey, in the preface to 'Lectures on Daniel the Prophet,' says, 'God is daily and hourly creating those myriads of human souls which He infuses into the bodies prepared by His Providence.' I presume he here uses the word soul in the same sense as I have been using the word spirit. Some persons divide the human constitution in three parts—body, soul, and spirit—and, in so doing, they have, I think, the sanction of inspiration. In 1 Thess. v. 23 it is said, 'I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless.' If by soul is meant the more subtle and delicate organisation of the body, connected with the operations of the mind, the fancy, the memory, the exquisite sensibilities of pity, generosity, affection, and the noblest emotions of Humanity, we may justly suppose that we inherit from our parents a more or less perfect corporeal structure in those respects. It may be that every human spirit is equal in its

primeval intrinsic essence, as to capacity and purity, whether located in the body of the lowest type of Humanity, or of a complete idiot—or whether associated with the form of a Newton, or the man of the highest intellectual and moral elevation. But, during the present probationary state of existence, the spirit is indissolubly united to a body, and can make no movement, intellectually or morally, except through a subtle physical organisation which is always more or less disordered, corrupt, and imperfect. It seems evident to my mind, that some children derive from their parents irascible natures, sensual natures, malignant natures — others a placid, kindly, serene temperament; some, great obtuseness of intellect—others, vivacity and high intelligence; some, gentle and compassionate feelings—others, brutal, cruel, selfish hearts. I conceive that such resemblances to parents are entirely in the physical organisation, and that, probably in every case, the spiritual essences are originally equal, when placed in the respective bodies; but soon assume differing conditions, from the differing influences exercised by the corporeal structure. It is evident that the physical organisation affects and modifies the moral feelings, from the fact that insanity sometimes transforms an affectionate nature into one filled with malignity. Some poor spirits are oppressed by a mountain-load of low, animal propensities, dull and inert faculties; while others, inheriting a nobler physical organisation, soar to superior heights of intellectual elevation and moral

excellence. I here refer to the reciprocal action of the body and spirit, in elevating the character, independent of any spiritual discernment of God, and a living union with Him, which is altogether a distinct thing, and results from a distinct source. I do not see how any intelligent mind can suppose that the spirit, the immaterial principle, is derived from the parents; and, therefore, cannot resist the conviction that, in every case, the spirit comes in a more direct manner from the Creator—as much so as if it were the only created spirit in existence. I am unable to trace the same relation, or even a similar or analogical relation, between spirits as between bodies; nor can I find any just grounds for the opinion, that spirits come into being with any inherited taint or corruption—or that, upon their entrance into existence, they are burdened with any species of guilt. On the contrary, it is my impression that the spirit which is placed in the body of a new-born infant is as pure as that of Adam, the only difference being that the spirit of Adam was located in a body having the brain, the blood, and every organ perfectly formed, well balanced, and harmoniously adjusted; whereas the spirit of an infant new-born into the world awakens to consciousness in a body with a corrupt and imperfect organisation in some, and perhaps in all, respects. If such be the case, I do not see how the doctrine of Original Sin can have any application to the spirit, which is the noblest part of man, or in what proper or rational sense Adam can be considered the federal head of his descend-



ants, in so far as relates to the most important element of their nature. Our spirits become involved in the system of sire and son, and are thereby subjected to the great law of mutual influences, so soon as they are located in bodies—but not in their primeval essence and origin. If I interpret the numerous passages of Scripture which I brought forward at the commencement of this chapter, as indicating the purpose of God to work out the permanent welfare of all His intelligent creatures, I can perceive how effectively the reciprocal action of the spirit and body, and the influence for weal and woe of one man on another, are co-operating in the promotion of that beneficent object. When that purpose is discerned, the fearful and demoralising dogmas that countless myriads are weighed down to irretrievable ruin and perdition by guilt not their own, vanishes from view, and the parallelism, unfolded by the Apostle, between Christ and Adam, becomes invested with a radiance of benignant love and goodness. If I reject that interpretation, and adopt the views so persistently enforced by theologians, every feature relating to the subject becomes environed with gloom and sadness, as well as with inexplicable difficulties.

## CHAPTER IV.

### PART SECOND.

As far as my limited knowledge permits me to judge respecting the gradual formation of theological dogmas into anything like a system, I am led to suppose that the Christian world owes its belief in an endless perpetuity of sin and misery rather to Pagan sources than to the influence of the Bible itself. The Old Testament does not afford clear intimations in regard to a future state. The Jews at the time of our Saviour seem to have had conflicting and vague notions. Josephus expressed himself as if the Pharisees believed in the transmigration of souls. He speaks thus in a passage quoted in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible:' 'They say that every soul is imperishable, but that the souls of good men only pass over into another body, while the souls of bad men are chastised by eternal punishments. Notwithstanding the ambiguous phraseology of Josephus, it appears undoubted that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the body;\* although it is not clear from whence they derived that doctrine. Our

\* Acts xxiii. 6-8.

Saviour taught the doctrine of the resurrection in clear and forcible terms; but the only passage of the Old Testament to which He referred in support of it, against the Sadducees, is one from which it may be drawn by inference, but which does not explicitly declare it. One of the chief rabbis of the Pharisees, referring to the immortality of the soul and retribution beyond the tomb, wrote as follows: 'Man searches in vain for these truths, which he desires so ardently; he in vain devours with avidity each page of Holy Writ; he does not find either of them, or the simple doctrine of the resurrection of the dead explicitly announced. . . . God has transmitted them verbally, with the means of finding them in the text. A supplementary tradition was necessary, indispensable; that tradition exists. Moses received the Law from Sinai (the Oral Law), transmitted it to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, the elders transmitted it to the prophets, and the prophets to the men of the great synagogue.' When he says those doctrines may be found in the text, the idea evidently is that, although they are not explicitly declared, any one who has received them through the oral law, may find passages in the sacred text from which he may draw them, by strong inference, and thus have his belief in them confirmed beyond a doubt. The Sadducees did not believe in the oral law, and denied the doctrine of the resurrection. A passage from the Mishna, quoted in Smith's 'Dictionary of the Bible,' says: 'Those who are born are doomed to die, the dead to live, and the

quick to be judged.' But, in an article on the Talmud, in the 'London Quarterly' for October 1867, the writer says: 'There is no everlasting damnation according to the Talmud. There is only a temporary punishment, even for the worst sinners.' I suppose none, even of the most pious Jews, ever had the faintest conception of a scheme of Divine benevolence for the whole of mankind; and probably they seldom thought of a future state, except in reference to the children of Abraham. Among the Prophets, it may have been given to the eagle eye of Isaiah, and to the calm and majestic intellect of Daniel, to perceive that the God of Judah is the Father of the universe, and that His magnificent plans embrace the welfare of all His creatures. But we see that, in the time of the Saviour and the Apostles, the ideas of the most pious Jews were extremely narrow-minded, in regard to the relations of God towards men; and the announcement that the Gentiles were the objects of His compassion and tenderness produced intense disgust and irritation. The mythological systems of Greece and Rome did not attempt to grasp the idea of eternity; and they had no clear notions of the distinction between moral good and moral evil. Those who were admitted into the Elysian Fields were delivered from physical pain and inconvenience; but they carried with them their petty vanities and frivolities, and even their envious, vindictive, and malevolent feelings. Some of those consigned to the gloomy horrors of Tartarus present rather a favourable contrast in

regard to moral qualities. There is,\* however, nothing in their conceptions of a future life which produces the impression that it could last for ever. Zoroaster, who is supposed to have lived at about the time of Daniel the Prophet, seems to have had elevated views, if the most favourable accounts given of his doctrines are correct. His conception appears to have been of a great supreme Power, inclined to good, and two subordinate influences of good and evil, in constant warfare. But what were his ideas of good and evil? Did he know that moral evil was evil in thought, word, and deed, or was it chiefly physical good and evil to which he referred? If he really had the elevated views attributed to him by some, I conjecture that he may have derived them from the Prophet Daniel, and by having some access to the Sacred Writings of the Hebrews. There is reason to believe that Zoroaster himself taught that good is alone eternal, and is destined to extirpate evil. But, at the period of the introduction of Christianity, his doctrines had become perverted, and his noble conception had degenerated into the idea that the conflict between good and evil would never terminate. The first Christians, who were chiefly men of humble birth, seem to have had simple notions

\* In the work of Conybeare and Howson, on the life and epistles of St. Paul, ch. ix., reference is made to the dreary inscriptions on Greek tombs. The writer remarks, 'Here and there in such inscriptions is a hint of immortality, but the general feeling of the Greek world concerning the dead is that of utter hopelessness.' Yet some writers pretend that Christianity is indebted to Platonism for its notions of immortality.

concerning a future state. Mosheim says that the simplicity of the Gospel began to be corrupted in the second century. We see, however, from the apostolical writings, that the corruption began at once, under their own eyes. Mosheim adds: 'If the reader is desirous of a striking example, he has only to take a view of the doctrines which began to be taught in this century, concerning the state of the soul after the dissolution of the body. Jesus and His disciples had simply declared that the souls of good men were, at their departure from their bodies, to be received into heaven, while those of the wicked were to be sent to hell; and this was sufficient for the first disciples of Christ to know, as they had more piety than curiosity, and were satisfied with the knowledge of this solemn fact, without any inclination to penetrate its manner, or to pry into its secret reasons.' When the fury of persecution abated, and men of position and learning embraced the new faith in larger numbers, the mixture of Platonism and Orientalism introduced a variety of comments; as few of the eminent minds in that era received the Gospel with the spirit and temper of unbiassed, simple-hearted children, or with that sincere and complete renunciation of the prejudices of education and family associations which was made by the Apostle Paul. Neander remarks, in his 'History of the Christian Religion and Church,' that 'the dualistic principle of the eternal conflict of good and evil was as much adapted to the currents of thought in the first centuries of

Christianity as Pantheism is to the intellectual tendencies of our own age ; and that it acquired great influence over eminent Christian minds in that era.' It must have given a strong colouring to their interpretations of Scripture ; otherwise, I can hardly think that they would have assigned the utmost intensity of meaning to the few passages which seem to declare that the kingdoms of light and of darkness will be alike eternal ; instead of admitting the restraining and modifying influence of the numerous texts which unfold the grand purpose of universal deliverance from the sway of moral evil. Yet, although the belief in eternal punishments and endless depravity was generally held, that solemn topic remained an open question in the Oriental Church for a long time. We have the eminent name of Origen in support of the doctrine of universal restoration. Gregory,\* bishop of Nyssa, defended that doctrine 'with the greatest logical ability and acuteness.' He said, 'All punishments are means of purification, ordained by Divine love, with a view to purge rational beings from moral evil, and to restore them back again to that communion with God which corresponds with their nature.' Theodore, bishop of Mopsuestia, a friend of Chrysostom, also advocated this doctrine in the fourth century. Manichæus, who lived in the third century, endeavoured to amalgamate the perverted doctrines of Zoroaster with Christianity. Augustine held the

\* Neander.

Manichæan tenets, in early life, for about ten years. But, on embracing Christianity, 'the antagonistic and equally conflicting powers of that system had offended his high conception of the supremacy of God.'\* Still, although he nominally repudiated that system, Dean Milman adds that 'his earlier Manichæism lent an unconscious colouring to his maturer opinions. In another form, he divided the world into regions of cloudless light and total darkness. But he did not mingle the Deity in any way in the darkness which enveloped the whole of mankind, a chosen portion of which alone were rescued by the gracious intervention of the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit.' It seems, then, that although Augustine had rejected the Manichæan notion, that the principle of evil was equal to the principle of good, and had vindicated the resistless supremacy of the God of Light, he yet, instead of attributing to the God of Light the glorious design of diffusing truth, love, and happiness in every region, as even the Manichæans did, had declared that the sway of darkness would be perpetuated throughout eternity, under His paramount rule. His fatal genius implanted that idea so firmly in the mind of Christendom, that since his time any doubt respecting the endless duration of depravity and misery has been regarded as almost equivalent to a denial of the fundamental principles of Christianity. If Augustine had not been strongly

\* Milman, 'History of Christianity.'



imbued with Manichæan sentiments, his powerful mind and apparently genial nature could hardly have extracted from the Sacred Volume such a system of the universe as he conceived. However, I suppose that the general habits of thought, the deficiency of enlarged sympathies, and the strong antipathies of those ages rendered it almost impossible for them to discern a purpose of universal benevolence in the Gospel plan of mercy. Pious and intelligent men of that period, and a long succession of generations, 'scrupled not (to use the words of Milman) to surrender the rest of mankind to that inexorable damnation entailed upon the human race by the sin of the first parents.' Even when Butler's 'Analogy' appeared, good men were content to see a plausibility of gloom diffused over the past, the present, and the future, and found a species of harmony and consistency in that which perpetuated endless discord. We are now somewhat differently situated in many respects, and possess a sort of intellectual benevolence, which cannot tolerate doctrines that once appeared congenial.

It is an inexpressible relief to the mind to turn away from those semi-Manichæan doctrines, and to lay hold of the delightful conviction, that it is the clearly declared purpose of the Creator to eradicate moral evil entirely from the universe. So soon as that purpose is discerned, the parallelism in Rom. v., which presented such a gloomy aspect to Dr. Chalmers, becomes invested with radiance and glory. The theological systems in

vogue estimate the results of the parallelism in an inverse ratio, and practically disregard the explicit language of the Apostle to the contrary. According to them, the sin of Adam brings evil on all his descendants, while the righteousness of Christ only secures important benefits for a limited portion of the human race; for it will hardly be contended that it is an important benefit to live even happily during a long period on this earth, if everlasting misery is to follow. But the man who sees in other passages of the Bible what appear to him undoubted declarations that all the intelligent creatures of God will be recovered from depravity and degradation, and will be brought into a state of friendship and loving communion with their Maker, is able to read such verses as the following with joyful emphasis: 'But not as the offence so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, hath abounded unto many. Therefore as, by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of One, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. Moreover, the law entered that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.' The phraseology in this chapter seems plainly to declare that the benefits will not only be co-extensive with the injury, but will exercise a glorious supremacy in the potency and efficacy of their results. In this life we see little more than the exhibition of one side of the parallelism; in the

next it will be completely displayed, both in its awful and gracious features, and the paramount overflow of goodness shall ultimately vanquish and extinguish the sway of corruption and malignity.

It appears to me that the principle of Election has been introduced for the purpose of making it possible to render moral evil an instrument of salutary discipline for the intellectual and emotional faculties of the universe. It is a measure of distinctive selection, the operation of which confers exceptional benefits on its objects, not only for their own welfare, but also with the view of carrying out the permanent welfare of all the intelligent creation. The employment of such a measure seems to recognise the fact, that no creatures are able to contend against moral evil without being destroyed, unless aided by Divine influences of a special nature. It presents two aspects to our contemplation. The elect angels were entirely preserved from the pollution of moral evil; the elect from among mankind are gradually delivered from its sway, after having been contaminated by its noxious influence. Theologians represent the design of this gracious principle as chiefly and almost exclusively contemplating the happiness of the elect angels, and of the elect among men. I feel convinced that such a confined view is entirely inconsistent with the whole structure of the Scheme of Redemption and with the inspired delineation of the character of

God; nor is it a mere harmless error, as it makes the measure appear imperfect, inexplicable, and even unjust. It seems clear, from the declarations of the New Testament, that the elect from among men were chosen to be the recipients of Divine influences special and exceptional in their nature, long before they came into existence, by that exalted Being to whom the past, the present, and the future are open at one view, and whose great purposes, both in their progressive stages and ultimate accomplishment, are completely unveiled to His comprehensive vision. This pre-existent determination and selection is, I believe, admitted by all sections of Christians, either tacitly or explicitly, and therefore I will merely quote a few passages on the subject. Ephes. i. 4: 'According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.' Rom. viii. 29, 30: 'For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified.' 1 Pet. i. 2: 'Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.' The words of our Saviour indicate, I think, that this distinctive selection is intended to promote the welfare of the whole human family. 'Ye are the light

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of the world. . . . Ye are the salt of the earth. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. . . . The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.' When I reflect on such declarations, and compare them with the Scriptural representation, that the pre-eminent characteristic of the Divine nature is love, I cannot believe that special influences would have been conferred on certain individuals, who mingle with the rest of their species, if the practical effect of those influences, and of the moral excellences which result from them, would not only deepen the guilt, but aggravate the final condition of those on whom they are not bestowed. Yet I think the existence of the elect on earth must either increase the culpability of those who are lost, and intensify their endless misery, or else serve for the promotion of their welfare, in a wide and extended sense. If we embrace the first alternative, we must suppose that countless myriads are abandoned to never-ending depravity and hopeless ruin, in order the more effectually to accomplish the mental and moral training of a certain favoured portion. This idea has been put forth by some divines, as I showed in the quotation from the works of the Rev. Robert Hall, in the third chapter. But it may be alleged, that the existence of the elect on earth serves to restrain the action of moral evil, and to render the whole

human family more happy in this life than they would be if exceptional influences were not exerted on a portion of Adam's race. Therefore, it may be contended that the presence and influence of the elect tend to diminish human guilt and depravity, and to check the fearful progression of sin, which would otherwise overwhelm mankind. Viewed in this way, the measure of Election may be considered as manifesting the comprehensive and universal benevolence of God, even though the general benefits resulting from it may terminate with the present life. That appears to be the most favourable view adopted by theologians, of the design and effect of this great measure. That is to say, special benefits of the most incalculable nature, and of endless duration, for some, combined with general influences, producing salutary effects, which, in a certain sense, reach all the race of Adam, but are soon followed by misery which must endure for ever. I rejoice in the persuasion that the Sacred Volume unfolds purposes which are of infinitely wider and more comprehensive benevolence.

All Christians admit that the scheme of Redemption contains illimitable resources, which are undoubtedly adequate for the recovery of all the guilty creatures of God. I have brought forward numerous passages at the commencement of this chapter, which, to my mind, clearly indicate the grand and glorious design of employing those boundless resources, in order to deliver all intelligent creatures from the sway of moral evil. When

I interpret the principle of election by the light emanating from such declarations, I see in it an important measure for the promotion of the glorious purpose which is thus unfolded. St. Paul speaks of himself and the other Apostles as 'workers together with God.' St. James refers to the elect as 'a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.' It is evident, I think, from many scriptural intimations, that the holy angels have been and are employed as honoured instruments in carrying forward the benevolent designs of God. It is no less evident, from the statements in the Sacred Text, and from the impressive lessons afforded by the history of the human race, that true Christians, if they are faithful, consistent, earnest, and energetic, may exercise the most important influence in promoting the welfare of their fellow-men. But it is equally clear to my mind, that neither angels who are free from pollution, nor good men, who are partially under the sway of sin, are able to extinguish its baleful action, or to implant the germ of spiritual life in any spirit. The ability to do this belongs to the Creator alone, and has never been delegated to created powers, however lofty, pure, and energetic. If we assume that moral evil is a deadly poison, and yet may be made an important instrument for the development of the mind and heart of the intelligent universe, we may, I think, perceive the suitability of the measure of election in connection with that object. A vast number of created beings were brought into existence in a state of ignorance and inexperience,

although endowed with capacities and powers capable of unlimited expansion and elevation. The Creator allowed to most of them liberty of thought and action, unfettered by His restraint, and they went astray. But, on a certain proportion, He exercised moral constraint, which checked their freedom, and guided their mental and emotional movements. Moral evil could not have served for purposes of salutary discipline, unless its baleful action had been vividly exhibited upon intelligent and responsible beings; and this could not have been done, if all had been preserved by strong moral constraint in a state of uprightness and holiness. But if some had not been thus preserved, the contrast between moral good and moral evil would not have been manifested, which contrast is an important and indispensable part of the process of instruction, enlightenment, and moral training. At the same time it is clear, that those who were preserved from sin did not owe their exemption from degradation and misery to their own inherent strength and firmness, but solely and entirely to Divine influences of an exceptional nature exerted on their behalf. This is true both of angels and men. The Apostle shows emphatically that, 'by one man, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.' He says to the believing Ephesians: 'By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God. . . . You hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins . . . and were by



nature the children of wrath even as others.' The preservation or the deliverance from moral evil of individuals among the angelic orders and the children of Adam is entirely owing to Divine influences of a special nature. Nothing is clearer to my mind than the conviction, that the holy angels would have swelled the ranks of the spirits of evil, and that the elect from among mankind would have remained in a state of corruption and darkness, even as others, if those special influences had not operated on them. It seems to me, that when we consider the important fact, which I think is clearly intimated in the Bible, that all created beings are equally incapable of maintaining themselves in the paths of truth and holiness, and all equally prone to fall under the dominion of moral evil, we may draw an irresistible inference, that any counteractive measures which emanate from Divine wisdom and goodness, have an universal purpose, even though their application may be restricted in the incipient stages. But we are not left to conjectures and inferences, in the midst of darkness and gloom. We have, as I firmly believe, clear declarations of a grand purpose of universal benevolence in numerous passages of Scripture, many of which I have brought forward at the commencement of this chapter.

There is so much confusion in the earth, so many deceitful appearances, such a blending of varied impulses and motives, producing apparently almost identical results, that, on a superficial view, the operation of the principle of election cannot easily

be discerned. We are led to infer, from the declarations of the Sacred Volume, that every human being, on arriving at the portals of the grave, enters the invisible world as belonging to one or other of two important divisions, essentially distinct in their moral and spiritual characteristics, in their emotions and aspirations, and in their position towards the Sovereign of the universe. But it is difficult to trace a distinction so important and momentous between men in this life. We find many, claiming to be the people of God, who, although scrupulously careful in maintaining certain religious observances, in discouraging certain practices, and discountenancing certain amusements, yet exhibit to the eye of a critical observer the same tempers and dispositions as other men when mingling in the busy scenes of life, on the mart, the exchange, or the political arena, with apparently no greater elevation of moral principle. This circumstance irritates and disgusts intelligent minds who make no particular profession of religion; and it becomes difficult to persuade them that, while in this life they can scarcely discern marked and radical distinctions, there can be a separation of such a momentous nature, and attended with such awful consequences, in the life beyond the tomb. This apparent confusion is inevitable under the great process of discipline which is going on, and is part of the trial to which men are subjected. But let it be remembered, that we need not be, like those who are tossed hither and thither on the waves of uncertainty,

without chart or compass. We have the Volume of Revelation, which makes known the hopes and aspirations, the struggles, the tendencies, aims, and desires of the children of God. We may try ourselves by this sure criterion; and we may judge of others, though it should always be with kindness and charity, according to the same unerring standard. Neither loud professions and pretensions, nor a fancied superiority over others, are enumerated by the inspired Apostle as among the fruits of the Spirit, or the legitimate effects of religious principle. I apprehend the great distinction is, that the children of God have spiritual life, with progressive sanctification, operating on their thoughts, words, and actions which the others have not. They are 'alive unto God;' they look to Him as a child looks to its parents; they naturally turn to Him, as an affectionate wife turns to a husband who has her love and confidence; they wish to please Him, they delight to think of Him.

There is much interest, mingled with sadness, in contemplating one view of this subject, which may, I think, illustrate some important features. We find many persons who are, apparently, not under the influence of religion, and yet are kind, honourable, upright, and truthful. They are affectionate husbands and fathers, they wrong no man, and liberally give of their substance to the poor. If they live and die thus, may not their weeping relatives consign them to the tomb 'in sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection'? Are they not such men as tend to make those around them

happy? Is there anything lacking in them? That is the question. A man of fine mental endowments and admirable moral qualities may become a poor creature in this life, by carelessness in regard to the health of his body; and all his gifts and graces may be powerless to save him from a miserable fate. If the health of the body is so important in connection with this short life, must not the well-being of the spirit be far more important in relation to an immortal existence? A spirit may be located in a corporeal structure, with a happy adjustment of the innate physical organisation in regard to the brain and other vital organs, and may be able easily and freely to exercise such thoughts and emotions as are pleasing to itself and all around. All this may have a beneficial influence on the moulding of the spirit, in a certain sense, and may be a step gained as regards its ultimate discipline. But it must be clear to every intelligent and reflecting mind, that love to God, and a living union with Him, are indispensable to form the spirit for enduring happiness. Remove that spirit from the favourably adjusted physical organisation, and from the endearing ties of earth, and what is its condition without love to God? Would it not find itself in a region of coldness, dreariness, and spiritual death? Our Saviour said, 'This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent.' Those who do not know God, who do not love Him, who are not united to Him, are clearly in a state of spiritual

or eternal death, whatever may be their pleasing and amiable qualities. Such qualities, which are chiefly the result of the physical organisation, do not seem to be permanently impressed on the spirit, even in this life. We often find that an amiable man or woman may become malignant through derangement of the brain, and sometimes even through the disappointments of life, and the effects of bodily disease not directly attacking the cerebral organs. I believe that nothing but spiritual life, in its incipient and progressive influence, can produce a beneficial impression of a permanent nature on a human spirit.

Let us turn to another picture. Here is a child, naturally ill-tempered, fretful, greedy, and selfish. It is difficult even for a mother to love him. He neither has affectionate sentiments, nor are such bestowed on him. The result is a character which inspires general repugnance; and if he dies, there is scarcely any one to pronounce a consolatory hope in regard to his fate. But let us suppose that this being, unhappy from his earliest years, by reason of circumstances over which he had no control, is visited in his spirit by a heavenly ray from the great Source of light and love. He who did not believe in the existence of kindness and goodness perceives the character of God, holy, true, compassionate, and tender, as manifested in the Sacred Volume. There is a wondrous change in his spirit, and it commences a great struggle against the terrible physical organisation in which it is placed. That spirit is born again, and becomes

united to the Saviour; it fights the fight of faith against all the combined ills to which it is exposed. If that child grows up, the man may never be so loveable as those to whom I have just referred. But there will be a stern warfare, attended with progressive sanctification, and gradual amelioration in the character and conduct. The struggles for mastery over evil will be apparent to observers, and they will be more impressed by the triumphs of Christian principle over fierce impulses and strong passions, in one with such an organisation, than by the undeviating placidity and kindness of the man who possesses innate qualities of a favourable nature.

It is a blessed lot to have a happily adjusted physical organisation resembling that with which the Apostle John was evidently endowed. When it is united with religious influences and principles, he who is favoured with such moves on through life peacefully and serenely, loving and beloved, unvexed with those sharp and grievous trials which are required to discipline others, and breathing the atmosphere of heaven while yet a tenant of earth. But, when separated from religion, its value and advantage to the spirit are necessarily of a limited nature; and we ought not severely to censure those who are destitute of that which does not depend on themselves. Some of the lower animals are timid, gentle, and affectionate; some are brave, faithful, but not quarrelsome; others are fierce, treacherous, and cruel. It is thus with men in their constitutional or innate qualities.

But it happens not unfrequently that a spirit located in a body with many unhappy tendencies rises to a greater height in this life, of conformity and love to God, than one connected with physical characteristics inspiring general estimation.

It is partly owing to the diversities in the physical organisation that it becomes so difficult to judge correctly as to the real moral and spiritual condition of our fellow-men. But each man may judge respecting himself by carefully perusing the Sacred Volume, and earnestly seeking the illumination and guidance which are never denied. We are informed in Genesis that God made man in His image ; and I have endeavoured to show that this striking phraseology applies to the spirit. I have also expressed the opinion that the spirits of men now are as much formed in the image of God as that of Adam when first introduced into existence. But it is evident, I think, that the native powers and capacities of the spirit, which entitle it to the glorious prerogative of resembling God, are latent and depressed, until they are awakened and called into action by the influences of the Holy Spirit. This awakening is equivalent to a new birth, and is in fact the real commencement of the spirit's life. Until this new birth ushers in its real life, the spirit remains in an unnatural, degraded, fettered, insecure condition, spiritually dead, totally unfit for an immortal existence, and incapable even of prolonged enjoyment, under the most favourable physical circumstances of its short-spanned earthly career. A spirit formed of

such noble elements as a human spirit can be satisfied with nothing short of a loving union with God, and from no inferior source can it receive a guarantee of permanent holiness and happiness.

It is my solemn conviction that the difficulty of tracing the operation of election is also, in a great measure, owing to the influence produced on the mental and moral qualities by the serious misconceptions which prevail respecting the character of God and the Gospel scheme of mercy and recovery. I endeavour to illustrate the subject to my own mind by having recourse to some analogies. I assume that the principle of election has always operated, and still operates in heathen countries, unacquainted with the Bible. It may be imagined that the wondrous influence of regeneration in such cases will awaken new perceptions, emotions, and aspirations in the human spirit, but that the intellect will remain very dark. There will be 'a putting away of the filth of the flesh,' and a change in the character, which will serve as an example to those around. But the individual will be like a blind man, who has heard a voice that thrilled him, but knows not from whence it comes; who has longings and aspirations, and is 'feeling after God, if haply he may find Him.' The presence of that elect one will have some beneficial influence in elevating the standard of morality, and enlightening the consciences of men on those points; but very little, if any, in counteracting the degrading ideas of idolatry, which must weaken and perhaps soon efface the transient impressions made on



the community by the holy life of an individual. I then reflect on the operation of election in connection with those who lived under the Old Testament Dispensation. We find that, under its earlier teachings, pious men exhibited devotion to God, truth, uprightness, and a strong sense of responsibility, but with many irregular features on some moral points. There was increased elevation of moral sentiment when the Psalms and prophetic writings were given. Still the intellect could only have narrow and contracted views, although infinitely wider than a heathen could attain, unless visited by some reflected rays from the disclosures of Revelation, as was evidently the case with many of the philosophers of the Ancient World. But 'the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. . . . For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.' (Heb. x. 1, 4.) Those who offered the appointed sacrifices in faith had peace in their consciences, but their intellect remained dark, although some of them faintly discerned the real way to peace and holiness, of which the Mosaic Dispensation was a type. Our Saviour said that John the Baptist, who was the herald of a new order of things, was more than a prophet; but he added, 'notwithstanding, he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.' We cannot imagine that a character like that of the Apostle Paul could have been formed and

developed under the Old Testament Dispensation ; because the love of Christ was the great motive power which constrained and metamorphosed him ; and that love was very dimly, if at all, apprehended by prophets and righteous men of old. The elect under the Old Dispensation were men of stern integrity and truth, with zeal for God, and unshaken constancy, and ofttimes endowed with much boldness and courage. The elect under the New Dispensation, who have clearness of light and powerful motives, ought to manifest a superior degree of truth and holiness, combined with the tenderness and the spirit of self-sacrifice which the Apostle Paul drew from the fountains of Divine love, previously repressed in appearance for ages, but now flowing with unlimited expansion and fulness. Can it be said that the love of Christ is a ruling and pre-eminent motive power with Christians in our days ? I doubt not that the principle of election continues to operate on the human race. But, in some important respects, the intellectual position of those who are brought under its influence, in Christian countries, is not much better than that of pious men living under the Old Dispensation. The latter had contracted ideas, in regard to the purposes of God towards the race of Adam. Are the ideas which prevail in Christian lands much enlarged on that point ? I think not. The latter perceived the glorious attributes of justice, truth, holiness, and wisdom in a restricted degree, and scarcely had any conception of the pre-eminent

Divine quality — love. What conceptions have Christians of the tenderness and love of the Divine Nature, or even of the justice and wisdom of God? I wish to avoid misrepresenting the statements of systematic theology; but, so far as I can gather from its lengthy disquisitions, they teach that God loves the elect, and will accomplish their everlasting happiness; but, beyond that, Divine love is made to appear barren of any permanent effects. If a man is brought under the influence of regeneration, and yet continues to entertain such views, he will be holy in his character, and will have secret communion with God; but his mind will not be elevated, and his emotional faculties will not be warmed and expanded. We cannot expect characters like those of the Apostle Paul to be formed and developed under such a theological system. We cannot expect to see conquests over the darkness of Paganism, and the sway of the Redeemer's hallowed rule to be extended over the earth. This can only be done by the influence of Divine love, acting on the minds and hearts of Christians, and transforming them into a living exhibition of its power and its reality, so that they may 'show forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.'

I believe that when the Old Testament Dispensation gave place to the great reality of which it was the type, the human race were totally unqualified to comprehend the Gospel scheme of mercy and recovery, although the most important sections

were in some degree prepared for a change, as there was a feeling of discontent and restlessness. The Pagan systems were losing the small amount of beneficial influence they might have exerted in times of unreflecting ignorance; and the progress of mental culture required a stronger motive power than the Levitical institutions supplied. The teachings of the Saviour and the Apostles began at once to counteract and remove the false notions, hateful practices, and malignant feelings which are antagonistic to the heavenly wisdom, purity, and benevolence so transcendently displayed in the Gospel. Very soon, however, the countries professing Christianity were debarred from having access to the Scriptures, and a dreary period of darkness, corruption, and ferocity ensued. The Reformers could not free themselves from the spirit of cruelty and barbarism which prevailed in their days, and were in consequence unable to have right conceptions of the love of God. As soon as the Bible was liberated from its long captivity of a thousand years or more, it began again to act on human thought and feeling. Its influence is seen in the gradually softening scale of rigour and repression, advocated by ecclesiastical authorities. The faggot was succeeded by bodily maiming; that was found too strong for public sentiment, and the ignominy of the pillory followed. After that the expression of obnoxious opinions was chastised by fines and imprisonment. During this century, civil disabilities, which were considered a mild and indispensable infliction,

never to be abandoned, have been and are being removed, one after another. Now it appears clear to my mind that, while ferocious sentiments pervaded the moral atmosphere, the Gospel plan of salvation could not be rightly understood, even by the most pious men. The theological dogmas which are held at the present time by the Christian Church were formed during the prevalence of ferocity, intolerance, and strong antipathies, which we have in a great degree abandoned. Yet we still cling to systems of doctrine transmitted to us from those cruel ages, and, as I have endeavoured to show, the discrepancy is becoming sensibly felt. If it be true that those systems give a perverted view of the Gospel scheme of mercy and goodness, the operation of election must necessarily be impeded, and its legitimate effects must be diminished.

I gather from the Sacred Volume, that the principle of election is designed to exercise very important influences in this life and the next. The duty of doing good was made known by the Saviour and the Apostles, and was exhibited in the conduct of true Christians to those who were generally callous to human suffering, and almost insensible to any kindly emotions, except such as flow from natural affection and friendship. The virtues of humility and long-suffering, and the heavenly principle of rendering good for evil, regarded by the Heathen as unmanly, and derogatory to human dignity, gradually made their way into the convictions of men, although they have as

yet seldom been manifested even by the most pious Christians. The licentiousness, which was viewed with mild tolerance, even by heathen moralists, assumed a different aspect under the teachings of Christianity. The dreary feeling of hopelessness, in relation to a future life, was succeeded by animating and joyous expectations, which astonished and impressed the Heathen. A sense of responsibility, as acting under the eye of an ever-present Deity, and a constraining influence of love and gratitude for the unparalleled tenderness and goodness so strikingly displayed in the scheme of redemption, at first excited ridicule as fanatical fancies, and yet arrested attention, as exercising effective power over human minds and hearts. The elect are required to cherish and cultivate these qualities, hopes, and principles as living realities, which elevate and soften the character, oppose a firmness of resistance against evil, diminish the load of human suffering, and bring willing captives to the feet of the Saviour, as the rightful Lord of the intellect and the affections. If we cannot perceive a clear and forcible exhibition of them in our age, there must be causes of obstruction, which it behoves the Christian world to investigate.

The elect have also to show in a peculiar manner the beneficial influence of suffering. Pain and sorrow have been appointed by Divine wisdom to accompany moral evil in its track, and to unveil its noxious properties. I apprehend that the spirits of darkness must have an impressive consciousness

that sin is a curse, although they may neither possess the ability nor the inclination to shake off its trammels. In human life, suffering is a great revealer of important secrets. Madame de Staël seemed to be aware of this when she wrote: 'Celui qui n'a pas souffert ne connaît rien.' The saying 'A wiser and a sadder man' is founded on the perception that salutary knowledge is obtained by suffering. We are living under the dispensation of sorrow and pain; 'the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.' The elect, as a rule, seem to suffer more than other men; and they are thankful for the valuable discipline which results from it. Even David, with the limited knowledge he possessed respecting the great scheme of Divine mercy, was able to say, 'Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word.' The Saviour taught His disciples to receive sufferings with gratitude, and even with joy; and we see in the writings of the Apostles, that they had learned the most important lessons in the school of sorrow, and recognised its salutary effects on themselves, and through them on others, so that they were able to glory in tribulations. The elect, or those who are enlightened and taught by the special influences of the Holy Spirit, are made the channels of beneficial impressions on others, by their demeanour under suffering, and by the visible improvement in their characters, which results from the discipline. In their case 'tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.' (Rom. v. 3, 4.) By

their presence and example on earth, the ministry of sorrow is sanctified and rendered an instrument of good, which otherwise would not be realised. 'The sorrow of the world worketh death' (2 Cor. vii. 10), and is akin to the anguish, impatience, hardness, and increased malignity, experienced by the spirits of darkness. Yet even that sorrow and anguish, although destitute of softening and sanctifying influences, possesses some capacity to enlighten, and is a preliminary measure of discipline, inasmuch as it unveils the properties and tendencies of moral evil, and serves to prepare those who suffer for ulterior measures of recovery.

We may contemplate, under another aspect, the co-operation of the elect in the grand purposes of universal benevolence. They are required to exhibit the principle of voluntary self-sacrifice, which appears to be the most efficient weapon in the contest between moral good and moral evil. Mr. Lecky recognises the value of this potent principle, and admits that Rationalism is not capable of supplying it. He says, 'The history of self-sacrifice during the last 1800 years has been mainly the action of Christianity upon the world. Ignorance and error have, no doubt, often directed the heroic spirit into wrong channels, and have sometimes even made it a cause of great evil to mankind; but it is the moral type and beauty, the enlarged conception and persuasive power of the Christian faith, that have chiefly called it into being, and it is by their influence alone that it can be permanently sustained.' The great principle of



voluntary self-sacrifice for noble ends has been consecrated by the example of the Creator, who has assumed the burdens and pains connected with it in an inconceivably greater degree than He requires from any of His creatures. Those among the children of men who are enlightened and taught by the Holy Spirit, become deeply impressed by the proofs of Divine love and compassion exhibited in the scheme of redemption. They are prompted to self-denial and self-sacrifice for the good of others, in whatever situation they are placed, according to the grace given to them and the measure of gifts and opportunities they possess. When we read the Epistles of St. Paul, we may perceive how powerfully he was influenced by the sentiment he inculcated on other Christians in the words, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.' (Phil. ii. 5.) His life is an illustration of the immense potency of self-sacrifice, as the most aggressive weapon which Christians can employ for penetrating into the strongholds of the empire of darkness. His reiterated declarations show that the principle of self-sacrifice was implanted in him by the influence of the self-sacrifice of Christ. Since his time there has been no effective movement against darkness and depravity without self-sacrifice; and we have abundant evidence, that when the love of Christ constrains men to live, not 'unto themselves but unto Him which died for them,' the noble principle of self-sacrifice acquires an irresistible energy. The conquest of the dark places of the earth

to the beneficent dominion of heavenly truth and righteousness can only be effected by the energetic use of this powerful weapon. The only way to remove the fearful mass of malignity and selfishness which has accumulated in the hearts of men, is to exhibit the tenderness of the Divine Nature, as shown in the Gospel plan of salvation, and to supply living specimens of its influence on humanity. The statements of the Bible, and the impressive admonition of facts, may convince the disciples of Christ that the indispensable energy of Divine influences will always accompany the faithful and earnest efforts of Christians, but will not descend on the waste places of the earth except through human instrumentality.

I infer that this vital principle of self-sacrifice will continue to operate until moral evil is extirpated. So long as sin exists, the dispensation of sorrow will endure; and so long as pain and suffering last, the Divine Nature will participate in them. I believe the self-sacrifice of the Son of God did not terminate at the close of His earthly career. The language of Scripture indicates that His Divine Essence will, in a certain sense, which we cannot comprehend, be confined in a material organisation, or be in some measure restrained by it, during the whole period of the system of mediation. (1 Cor. xv. 28.) This wonderful union of the Divine with a human nature involves a self-sacrifice of an undefined duration. The unflinching contemplation of the terrible and repulsive spectacles produced by sin, which must continue

so long as it exists, appears to me plainly a self-sacrifice, inasmuch as the sight must be repugnant to the holiness of God; and the degradation, corruption, and anguish endured by His creatures must wound, in the most acute manner, the love and tenderness which are declared to be the pre-eminent characteristics of the Divine Nature. It seems to me plainly a self-sacrifice, which the Creator has suffered deliberately from age to age, as the circumstances which have produced moral evil and its consequences were clearly foreseen and appreciated by Him when He conferred intellectual and moral life upon myriads of creatures, destined for immortality. Theologians, both ancient and modern, express themselves as if, by shutting up the spirits of darkness and the spirits of wicked men in an undefined locality which they call hell, the order of the universe would be re-established, and the Creator, surrounded by the holy portion of His intelligent creatures, might view the result with serene complacency. Can God shut up the wicked so as to be hidden from His cognisance and perception? Can the sound of their agony cease to enter into His ear? Can He sever the ties which bind them to Him as His creatures, who cannot make a movement unless supported by His energy, and whose existence would not endure an instant without His sustaining power? Such an idea might be admitted by those who lived in the time of Calvin, when ferocious sentiments universally prevailed; but it is extremely repugnant to our age. We feel that the existence of

depravity, misery, and anguish must give pain to those whose characters are purified, elevated, and softened, and that they would be compelled by irrepressible impulses to strive for the removal of such harrowing scenes. These kindly feelings proceed from God; they are implanted and nurtured by the principles and precepts unfolded in His word. They are small streams from the great ocean of love, which is the most striking feature of His own character. It is clear to my mind, when I reflect on the wisdom, energy, and firmness of God, as well as on the tender qualities to which I am adverting, that the contemplation of sin and sorrow involves self-sacrifice and suffering on the part of the Creator, and that this Divine self-sacrifice will continue until sin and sorrow are entirely removed. This self-sacrifice is passive, being the endurance of pain, from certain circumstances which are permitted and tolerated, instead of being suppressed and extinguished. We may however, I think, gather from the Sacred Volume that the active self-sacrifices of the Creator will also continue until the true and complete Cosmos is entirely constructed. Christ 'must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet.' Here it seems evident, that to reign is not to triumph; for when that is secured, the reign ceases. To reign is to conduct certain energetic measures of conflict, but not the conflict of enmity against enmity. Enemies are subdued, in the Gospel sense, by being converted into friends. They are not crushed, nor forcibly repressed, with their malignant feelings in full

vigour. Their enmity is removed, and the process of subjugation and transformation is effected by Divine self-sacrifices of an active nature. The Rev. Stanley Leathes, in the passage I have already quoted, refers to the 'Christ character of God' which the Prophets of old were able dimly to perceive. He says, 'It was given to these men to see that there was that in Him which, under the requisite circumstances, would be willing to endure the extremest sufferings for man.' I believe this idea is sanctioned by the declarations of Scripture, and that this disposition of God is ineradicable, unalterable, and applies not only to the feelings of God towards men, but towards all His creatures; and is not confined to certain epochs, but exists with unchanging, unabated freshness and vigour throughout eternity. The 'requisite circumstances' are darkness, error, corruption, degradation, malignity, suffering, anguish. These 'requisite circumstances' will call forth Divine self-sacrifices until they are no longer needed.

Sorrow and sympathy must be felt by the redeemed in heaven so long as sin and misery exist, and they will participate in the glorious measures for the extinction of moral evil. The tender and kindly sensibilities—extending beyond the narrower circle of natural affection and friendship—which are developed and nurtured, and may be said to be originated, by Christianity, afford strong confirmatory evidence on those points. Yet how different are the ideas that have been handed down to us. Baxter was undoubtedly a

truly pious man ; but he could not liberate himself from the narrow-minded and ferocious spirit which prevailed in his time. He penned the extraordinary sentence which I have already quoted, and there seem to be many in our own day who agree with it. ‘The saints shall look down upon the burning lake, and in the sense of their own happiness, and in the approbation of God’s just proceedings, they shall rejoice and sing.’ That was his idea of the temper of those who would pass an immortality in the enjoyment of the ‘Saints’ Rest.’ He was unable to perceive that such sentiments are radically opposed to the spirit of the Gospel, the principle of which is exhibited in the words : ‘God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.’ It is the principle of doing good to the evil—of overcoming evil with good. Nor could he discern the solemn fact, that such sentiments contain the elements of moral destruction, and that if it were possible for the redeemed in heaven to entertain such feelings, their condition would gradually become the same as that of the lost, the worst feature of which is malignity, which separates from God. ‘He that loveth not, knoweth not God ; for God is love.’ (1 John iv. 8.) What a contrast is presented by the language of the Apostle Paul in Rom. ix. 1–3 : ‘I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren, my kinsmen accord-

ing to the flesh.' That was the spirit of self-sacrifice which he learned in the school of Christ; and I venture to assert, that he was never more closely united in character and qualities with the Saviour, was never nearer to Him in mind, heart, and purpose, than at the moment when those irrepressible emotions found vent in those strong terms. This language is remarkable, and was uttered under the sanction of the Holy Spirit; so that we may, I think, regard it as expressing something real and practical, and not as simply produced by overwhelming excitement. Conybeare and Howson render the passage as follows: 'I speak the truth in Christ (and my conscience bears me witness, with the Holy Spirit's testimony, that I lie not, I have great heaviness and unceasing sorrow in my heart; yea, I could wish that I myself were cast out from Christ as an accursed thing, for the sake of my brethren.' Here we may trace a resemblance to that which Mr. Leathes calls 'the Christ character of God'—a willingness to endure the extremest of sufferings. Christ was 'made a curse for us' (Gal. iii. 13); and the Apostle Paul was willing to be accursed from Christ, to be cast out from Christ as an accursed thing. The solemnity of the declaration, and the earnest appeal to the Holy Spirit, indicate to my mind that these words portray, not merely peculiar emotions belonging to an individual, but the spirit of self-sacrifice, which will be awakened and developed in all those who are strongly impressed by the love of God, as manifested in the wondrous

plan of salvation. Can we imagine that an elevated, holy, and compassionate being, under the influence of such feelings, would look down on the burning lake and rejoice? No: he would plunge into it; or, in other words, he would be animated in such a measure by the influence of the love of Christ, and by tenderness and compassion for those who were suffering from that which had once imperilled his own safety and happiness, that he would be willing to endure privations, dangers, and sufferings of the most painful nature, in order to exhibit to those who were in an abyss of guilt, darkness, and depravity, the ineffable wisdom, benignity, and tenderness of God. The compassionate and earnest feelings of the Apostle Paul were moved thus deeply and overwhelmingly by the condition of his own people, who had the Law and the Prophets—all the moral and spiritual light that had been shed on the earth—and yet were in more hopeless, irremovable darkness than the Heathen. He could judge of the fearful maze of perverse error and prejudice in which they were involved, by the recollection of his own thoughts and feelings a few years before. When he called to mind the undoubting confidence and fierce bigotry which then impelled and infuriated him, and the indescribable contrast which his present views and emotions presented, his heart sank within him, under the conviction that nothing but a miracle could deliver his countrymen, even as one had delivered himself. The remembrance that his own impetuous, ardent zeal, fiery eloquence, and



irresistible energy had fanned the flame of rancour and intolerance into fury, and had urged many against Christianity, who still continued its blind and mad opponents, must have infused the bitterness of remorse into the agonised longing and wrestling of his spirit, the despairing cry of his heart. He strove earnestly and imploringly with his countrymen, whenever the opportunity was afforded ; but they always turned upon him with unrelenting scorn and hatred. The fond memories of this life will not be extinguished in the regions beyond the tomb ; and it may be that the redeemed will be permitted to exhibit Divine truth, purity, and love to the objects of their earthly tenderness ; that those among the redeemed whose perverse and evil conduct has destroyed souls, will strive agonisingly for their recovery, during many weary ages, meeting with mockery, scorn, and hatred, until the happy hour when softening beams from the great Source of goodness will melt obduracy and malignity ; and that lofty, energetic spirits, of widely expanding benevolence and love, will go forth as conquerors, beneath the smile of God, unfurling the glorious banner of redemption, and labouring with self-sacrificing ardour, even as Paul among the Gentiles. These may appear fantastical notions to most ; but I found them on the passages of Scripture to which I have referred ; the inferences\* which the measure of

\* I believe such an inference may be drawn from the measure of election by an irresistible logical process. I feel convinced that the statement of some Calvinistic divines, that the Creator accords

election suggests; and the important fact that Christianity is developing moral sensibilities at once tender and widely expansive, as well as fortitude and powers of patient endurance, all which seem to point to an active participation in the unceasing conflicts between moral good and evil, destined evidently to continue until decisive results are secured. My ideas are vague and confused, as are all my conceptions respecting the invisible world. It is enough for me that the Holy Scriptures afford a strong suggestion of a powerful engine for good, to operate against the essence of moral evil, which is malignity, and I rejoice in the reflection.

‘There remaineth a rest to the people of God.’ I believe the Scriptures indicate that this rest embraces gradations of an important nature. True believers participate in it to a greater or smaller extent in this life. Reliance on God as a rock afforded a wondrous amount of moral and spiritual rest to the Old Testament saints; but their intellect was always dark, and often sorely perplexed. The luminous discoveries of the New Dispensation have diffused a radiance of light on special blessings to certain individuals of the human race, because He loves them more than others, cannot be sustained by an intelligent interpretation of Scriptural declarations. All special blessings and privileges have responsibilities and duties attached to them, and are given for the furtherance of widely extending objects. Even in well-ordered human governments, the progress of enlightened sentiments renders it difficult to maintain special privileges in favour of any section of the community, unless it can be plausibly shown that the concession promotes the general welfare.

the moral government of God and His purposes, which may enable Christians to walk in comparative sunshine. But their own defects, shortcomings, and follies, and the constant and more conscious struggle they must maintain against 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,' make them far more sensitive to the bondage of corruption than those who were not favoured with such clear revelations and such elevated motives and examples. A wondrous change ensues when the ties which unite the spirit to the body are severed, and the elect are freed from that personal bondage. There is then a further gradation of rest, of which it is difficult for us to form any adequate conception. But they still witness moral evil and its fearful consequences. They have the hallowed rest of undoubting convictions, of freedom from sin, of unclouded confidence in God's truth and love. But they see that others are in great darkness, depravity, and misery, and their tenderest sensibilities are acutely wounded. A glorious and complete rest will arrive at length, although perhaps incalculable ages of conflict will intervene;—the ineffable rest produced by completely satisfied affections and sensibilities—the total absence of jarring and discordant elements—the sense of exquisite harmony—the aspect of congeniality and suitability—the cheering warmth and expansion of universal benevolence, cordiality, and good-will—the agreeable consciousness of truth and reality pervading all regions—the frank, hearty, and sincere reverence,

loyalty, and love towards God, stamped on every brow, and shining clearly in every eye; with no looks of sullen defiance, sneering indifference, anxious perplexity, or brutal stupidity. Such a rest can only be enjoyed when the Cosmos of spiritual, intellectual, and physical life stands forth in full, complete, symmetrical grandeur; when light, purity, and love pervade the whole extent of the intelligent Creation, and God is all in all.

I have still to offer some observations on my Sixth Proposition, which is,

The few texts in the New Testament which seem to declare that there will be never-ending depravity and misery in the universe, must be understood in a manner consistent with the other class of scriptural passages which I have brought forward.

It seems to me that there are very few texts which appear to give support to the doctrine of Eternal Punishments. I have gone through the New Testament several times, and have only been able to find the following:—Matt. xii. 32: ‘Who-soever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.’ (The parallel passages in Mark and Luke are as follows: ‘He that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation.’ . . . ‘Unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.’) Matt. xxv. 46: ‘But these shall go away into everlasting

punishment.' Mark ix. 43, 44 : 'It is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' 2 Thess. i. 8, 9 : 'In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ : who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power.' 1 John v. 16 : 'There is a sin unto death : I do not say that he shall pray for it.' Jude 6 : 'And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, He hath reserved in everlasting chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.'

I do not think there are any other texts on which it is possible to found the doctrine of eternal punishments. I am not qualified to judge what degree of force the original words really possess which are translated so as to indicate never-ending duration. The Rev. F. D. Maurice (an eminent clergyman of the Church of England), in his 'Theological Essays' and in his 'Letter to Dr. Jelf,' expresses the opinion that 'Eternity in relation to God has nothing to do with time or duration;' and that also, 'in reference to life or to punishment, it has nothing to do with time or duration.' His interpretation is, 'that the eternal punishment is the punishment of being without the knowledge of God, who is love, and of Jesus Christ, who has manifested it, even as eternal life is declared to be the having the knowledge of God

and of Jesus Christ.' In a commentary on 'The Theology of F. D. Maurice,' which an American divine makes in the 'Bibliotheca Sacra' for October 1865, his sentiments on this subject are represented as follows: 'The import which Mr. Maurice gives to the words "eternal" and "eternity" is, that they denote primarily a permanent, fixed state of relationship to God; which state is not a mere negation of time, nor is it in any possible way subject to time, but altogether excludes the idea of time; and is a state into which the soul may enter, as soon as it comes into the true knowledge of God, and union with His Eternal Spirit: even eternal life therefore is, he thinks, in its full and perfect sense, something real and absolute, something like the nature of God. . . . It is the righteousness, truth, love which cannot be measured by time, which do not belong to time, but may be brought within the apprehension of the meek and lowly. . . . The eternal life is the righteousness, truth, and love of God, which are manifested in Jesus Christ, manifested to men, that they may be partakers of them, that they may have fellowship with the Father and with the Son. . . . Eternal death is no more connected with time than eternal life, but is essentially that state of darkness and sin, whether in this world or the future, which results from the total loss of the knowledge and love of God.'

Similar opinions are expressed in a pamphlet which was published by Messrs. Longman and Co. in 1862, under the title of 'Forgiveness after

Death,' by a clergyman. I make some extracts from it. 'It is a very plain and safe proposition that "death" is the negation of "life." And "eternal life" is named so frequently, that we are enabled from it to understand what "eternal death" must be. "This is life eternal," said the Saviour, "that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou has sent" (John xvii. 3). "This is the record," says St. John, "that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son hath not life" (1 John v. 11, 12). "We show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (1 John i. 2). In exact harmony with these statements our Church confesses, in one of our daily collects, that "in the knowledge of God standeth our eternal life." In the face of these, and of a multitude of similar passages, no one will contend that "eternal life" means nothing more than endless felicity. It is plain that the life spoken of is *spiritual* life, life for the soul, not dependent upon the changes and chances of this mortal life, but dependent upon fellowship with the Divine Father. It is plain that it belongs to the present stage of existence, as well as to the future. It is plain that the life is called "eternal," not to define its duration, but to intimate its kind or quality. It is contrasted with mortal life, animal life, or psychical life. Eternal life is the life of children of the Eternal God, the Father and Begetter of their spirits. We are

not left at sea, therefore, when we are driven from the vulgar sense of death, in the phrase "eternal or everlasting death." We are enabled to conclude that this phrase denotes the condition of souls which are not enjoying "eternal life." It is the state of not knowing God, of being out of fellowship with God—the state of darkness and isolation in self. Much misery, much punishment may attend this state; but suffering is not its essence.'

John Foster, when writing on the subject of Future Punishments, said, in reference to the declarations of the Saviour, which are generally understood in such an awful sense: 'There is a force in these expressions at which we may well tremble. On no allowable interpretation do they signify less than a very protracted duration and a formidable severity. But I hope it is no presumption to take advantage of the fact, that the terms everlasting, eternal, for ever, original or translated, are often employed in the Bible, as well as other writings, under great and various limitations of import; and are thus withdrawn from the predicament of necessarily and absolutely meaning a strictly endless duration. The limitation is often, indeed, plainly marked by the nature of the subject. In other instances the words are used with a figurative indefiniteness, which leaves the limitation to be made by some rule of reason and proportion. They are designed to magnify, to aggravate, rather than to define. My resource in the present case is then simply this—that



since the terms do not necessarily and absolutely signify an interminable duration, and since there is, in the present instance, to be pleaded for admitting a limited interpretation, a reason in the moral estimate of things, of stupendous, of infinite urgency, involving our conceptions of the Divine goodness and equity, and leaving those conceptions overwhelmed in darkness and horror if it be rejected—I therefore conclude that a limited interpretation is authorised.’ He likewise draws an argument against endless duration from degrees of punishment, so plainly stated in Scripture. He expresses surprise that Christians in general view the doctrine of eternal punishments with so much serenity. That is certainly a wonderful fact. If we were told, on good authority, that cholera, or some other frightful disease, would rage with deadly fury in China, such an announcement would undoubtedly be heard with dismay and grief, and would produce intense agitation. Yet we are so accustomed to the belief that countless myriads of intelligent and sensitive beings will suffer never-ending torments—and among them our own kindred, friends, and acquaintance—that we not only retain that belief with placid composure, but are actually filled with horror when any one expresses a doubt of its truth, as if it were one of the great bulwarks of the Christian religion.

John Foster does not ground his rejection of the doctrine of eternal punishments on scriptural intimations of a comprehensive purpose of univer-

sal benevolence, which I presume he did not discern. He says: 'It is the moral argument, as it may be named, which presses irresistibly on my mind.' He endeavours to form some idea of eternity by imagining 'the number of particles in our globe, —each annihilated with an interval of one thousand or a million of years. When all are gone, the entire space of time would bear no proportion to eternity.' He then considers man, 'his nature, his situation, the circumstances of his brief trial and sojourn on earth.' He reflects on his ignorance, the corrupt propensities he inherits, the crowd of temptations which assail him, the weakness of his judgment, the feeble action of his conscience, the intervention and activity of the great tempter and destroyer. He adds: 'In short, his condition is such that there is no hope of him, but from a direct special operation on him of what we denominate Divine grace. . . . And how awfully evident is it, that this indispensable operation takes place on a comparatively small proportion of the collective race.' He then applies the scriptural declarations concerning the Divine goodness, and the delineation of the Divine Nature as pre-eminently characterised by the tender quality of love; and, taking into view that the terms used in regard to future punishments do not necessarily and absolutely imply endless duration, he arrives at the conclusion that a limited interpretation is authorised and even demanded.

If this argument exercised an irresistible in-

fluence on John Foster, and a number of other intelligent and pious ministers to whom he refers, it seems to me that any one who believes that the whole structure of the Gospel scheme, and numerous passages of Scripture, indicate a comprehensive purpose of universal benevolence, embracing all the intelligent creatures of God, must be still more strongly convinced that the doctrine of eternal punishments is founded on a misconception of the Creator's character and designs, and a misinterpretation of the inspired declarations on those important topics. This moral argument has acquired increasing strength, from the clearer perceptions entertained, even since the time that Foster wrote, of the respective properties and applicabilities of physical force and moral influence, and the mode in which the principles of the Gospel are operating for the elevation and improvement of Humanity. To my mind the whole argument possesses such strong claims to attention, that I am surprised at the small amount of impression which such obvious and self-evident considerations appear to exercise on the Christian intelligence of our day.

The writer of the pamphlet on 'Forgiveness after Death' alludes to the images used by the Saviour, in reference to future punishment, the chief of which is 'Gehenna,' translated 'Hell.' He says: 'These figures have acquired, from a long tradition, the property of suggesting to our minds the whole system of a place of torment and misery to which the lost are to be consigned, and in

which they will curse God for ever, without the possibility of repentance or forgiveness. . . . It is necessary for the candid reader to be on his guard against this assumption.' He speaks as follows of Gehenna, which has been translated Hell: 'Of this we find the following account in the Dictionary of the Bible: Gehenna, or the Valley of Hinnom, was a deep narrow glen to the south of Jerusalem, where the idolatrous Jews had once offered their children by fire to Moloch. In consequence of these abominations, the valley was polluted by Josiah, and became the common lay-stall of the city, where the dead bodies of criminals and the carcases of animals, and every other kind of filth, was cast, and, according to some authorities, the combustible portions consumed with fire. From its ceremonial defilement, and from the detested and abominable fire of Moloch, if not from the supposed ever-burning funeral piles, the later Jews applied the name of this valley, Ge Hinnom, Gehenna, to denote the place of torment, and some of the Rabbins fixed here the Door of Hell.' We may imagine that this valley was considered accursed, being full of pollution and abominations. To cast a dead body there was to treat it with the greatest ignominy, being mixed with corpses of malefactors, carcases of unclean animals, and every kind of filth. The burning continued without intermission, as there was an unfailing succession of fresh objects to consume, and not because each object continued to burn without end. The worms had a constant supply of gar-

bage to devour. Isaiah evidently referred to this seat of destruction and pollution in the last verse of his prophecies. 'And they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me; for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.' It seems clear that our Saviour quoted the words of Isaiah when He said, 'where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.' I do not know upon what ground the word 'Gehenna' has been translated 'Hell;' but I think that if we now had to interpret the meaning of this word 'Gehenna,' in full view of the source from whence it was derived, and unfettered by preconceived notions, inculcated on us in our infancy, we should not assign such an extreme meaning to the word 'Hell' as we have received by tradition.

It is an interesting circumstance, that St. Paul, who wrote more than any other Apostle concerning the Gospel plan of salvation, and the mode of its operation—as also respecting a future state—scarcely makes use of any expressions which can be interpreted to mean that depravity and misery will be endless. This is admitted by Olshausen, in his Biblical Commentaries. He says: 'It may certainly be affirmed that St. Paul is the writer in the New Testament who touches on the doctrine of eternal damnation most rarely, most permits it to remain in the background, and contains most of the expressions, which, considered *per se*, seem to teach general restoration.' I do not know if

there is any passage in the writings of St. Paul, except that which I have cited from the Epistle to the Thessalonians, which even has the appearance of giving support to the doctrine of eternal punishments. The Apostle Paul was a man of pre-eminent intelligence, and he evidently had a glimpse of the awful realities of the invisible world, such as perhaps was vouchsafed to no other of the children of Adam (2 Cor. xii. 1-7). If the doctrine of eternal punishments is true, it is strange that he who wrote more than any of the Apostles should not have brought it forward clearly and impressively; and this surprise is increased when we reflect that so many of his declarations seem to indicate universal restoration. I have quoted the passages from the Epistles of St. John and St. Jude, because I believe they are generally considered as supporting the fearful dogma referred to, although I do not see that it can rigorously be deduced from those passages. I do not think it could have been derived from the teachings of any of the Apostles, unless some of the expressions they use had been understood as referring to the language employed by our Saviour. But I beg to submit that it is doubtful if the language of the Saviour can justly bear the extreme meaning that has been put on it; and that we ought to keep in mind the reiterated statement of our Lord, that His teachings were of a partial and restricted character, and would be elucidated by the clearer developments of the Divine purposes of mercy to be communicated

by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit after His departure. I believe the parables of the Saviour have a much greater depth of meaning than is generally assigned to them. I shall venture, a little farther on, to illustrate the idea I have as to the Saviour's impressive style of teaching, by a reference to Matt. xxv. 31-46, which, I think, has been interpreted in a way by no means creditable to the intelligence of Christians. We must endeavour to draw out the important lessons He taught by a careful study of the Apostolical elucidations. It is on this principle that we reject the doctrine of transubstantiation, which the Roman Catholics uphold by interpreting the language of the Saviour in its literal signification. We understand it as having a symbolical and, as we think, a far more impressive meaning, one which bears more on spiritual interests; and we arrive at that meaning by comparing His words with the declarations of the Apostles, and by having some regard to what we call the dictates of common sense. I contend that the doctrine of eternal punishments is equally opposed to the dictates of common sense, as is shown in the moral argument of John Foster, and the considerations I brought forward in the first chapter. I likewise submit that a modified interpretation of the Saviour's language is imperatively demanded by the Apostolic intimations of a comprehensive purpose of universal benevolence, to be accomplished by the Gospel scheme of salvation. I think that purpose is indicated in the words of the

Saviour Himself, which I quoted at the beginning of this chapter, among the numerous texts which, to my mind, make known that purpose. I allude to such declarations as the following: 'For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. . . . And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me. . . . I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.'

In the pamphlet which I have mentioned, allusion is made to the difficulty of discriminating, in the discourses of the Saviour, between the passages which refer to earthly events and those which point to scenes in the invisible world. We find this difficulty when reading Matt. xxiv. xxv., Mark xiii., Luke xxi. The earliest Christians misinterpreted the declarations of the Redeemer, as they believed that His second coming, and the end of the world, would take place very soon. The words used by our Saviour warranted such an expectation quite as much as the texts in reference to a future life seem to warrant a belief in eternal punishments. But the language of the Apostles modifies the apparent meaning, and elucidates the real meaning in both cases. I think we may now perceive, in some degree, the real meaning of the Saviour when speaking of the important events which were to follow after His departure from the earth. Yet we are not surprised that the first Christians derived from His language the belief that the world would come to an end before the generation then living had



ceased to exist. The error into which they fell, and which appears natural, may teach us to be extremely careful and thoughtful, in our efforts to form right conceptions respecting the solemn events of the future, and particularly when we are striving to interpret the inspired declarations concerning the awful realities of eternity.

We have to contemplate, on the one hand, the strong language of the Saviour, which seems to many minds to indicate never-ending sufferings. But we must reflect, at the same time, on the whole structure of the Gospel scheme of mercy, with its boundless resources, adequate to effect the restoration and recovery of all the erring, sinful creatures of God; the Divine self-sacrifice, the immense unfathomable ocean of love, the mighty irresistible energies in operation. We must take into view, that it is impossible for the human mind to perceive how the pre-eminent characteristic of the Divine Nature, emphatically declared to be love, can be satisfied, if depravity and misery are to be hopelessly perpetuated; while it is easy for any one to see, that all the attributes of God may co-operate most harmoniously for the entire extinction of moral evil, with its attendant anguish. We cannot leave out of consideration the undoubted fact that the purer, more elevated, and compassionate a human being is, the more anxiously does he desire that corruption and misery may be removed from his fellow-men, and the more does the existence of depravity afflict him, even at a distance from him. We must take

into account the numerous texts which declare that Christ died for all mankind, and those passages which seem to announce as clearly as language can do, that it is the purpose of God 'by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself,' to 'gather together in one all things in Christ,' to 'subdue all enemies unto Him.' We are entitled to question the Volumes of Nature and Providence, while striving rightly to comprehend the volume of Revelation, as they have all proceeded from the same Author. If their disclosures point, in an impressive manner, to a great purpose of universal benevolence, we must not disregard the intimation. Nor can we shut our eyes against the lesson which another intellectual process supplies. If the enlightened deductions of reason, in regard to human relations, to which I referred in the first chapter, and which have been stimulated and guided by the circulation of the Bible, are found incompatible with the belief, that the Sovereign of the universe will leave any of His creatures in a hopeless state of darkness, corruption, and misery, that fact cannot fail to give an increase of strength to our interpretation of Scripture as indicating an universal purpose of benevolence. The moral argument of Foster adds its powerful advocacy of the same view.

When I reflect on this overwhelming mass of considerations which seem to be opposed to the most obvious interpretation of the Saviour's language in regard to the final condition of the impenitent, I am led to the inference that we are not quali-

fied to understand, in their full and comprehensive significance the declarations of our Lord, which were mostly delivered in the form of parables. The Redeemer spake as never man spake, and thought as never man thought, because His mind was in a condition entirely different from that of any other of the children of Adam, not only by reason of possessing the influences of the Holy Spirit in a degree immeasurably superior, but also on account of the union of the Divine with the human nature. He saw the most awful realities of the universe in a way of which we scarcely have any conception, but which the human intellect will be able to comprehend with increasing clearness as it becomes more and more elevated in its spiritual discernment. When the Saviour employed the remarkably strong language in regard to the events that would succeed His death and resurrection, and which led His disciples to expect that the end of the world would soon take place, He had before His view the inauguration of the most portentous conflicts between opposing forces that had ever occurred in relation to the destinies of Humanity. He saw the ushering in of a new era, during which the energies of the kingdom of heaven against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and the fierce resistance of the latter, would be displayed in a manner that had never yet been witnessed, and of which the most appalling physical convulsions were but faint emblems. The immense accession of power, which moral good would gradually acquire, was perhaps indicated in

the words, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven' (Luke x. 18); which was the perception of a most impressive fact, although that fact has been but faintly appreciated by human intelligence, and as yet has been very partially realised. So, in like manner, the Saviour discerned the intensely noxious, and apparently incurable, virulence of sin, in its action on the intellect and the heart, to a degree which we can but dimly estimate. He beheld the fearful chaos of mental perversity and moral turpitude, the bottomless abyss of perdition, the unquenchable fire of agony; and He employed the most forcible language to convey to Humanity some conception of the awful reality. It was perhaps a part of the self-sacrifice of Christ that His teaching would be misapprehended in a great measure, as it was of too elevated a nature for the gross perceptions of Humanity, until gradually educated, in its collective intellectual capacity, for a finer discernment of spiritual truth.

The Saviour indicated, in far more impressive terms than was ever done before, the immortality of the soul, and the fearful action of sin, both in this world and the next. But He did not clearly unfold the vast benefits which would flow from His atoning sacrifice and spiritual rule, although I think His language gives some intimations of the universal blessings which would be diffused. Its tendency is rather to exhibit the intense virulence of moral evil, and the fierce conflicts which would be inaugurated, under the Gospel scheme of mercy, between the opposing powers of light and darkness,

than to disclose the cheering prospect that moral good would ultimately triumph. He was essentially a 'Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.' He entered into the darkest and most gloomy shadows of the dispensation of pain and suffering. During His life there was, apparently, not one of His disciples who had a just conception of the real design of the Redeemer's advent on earth, and of the consequences that would flow from it. His language is characterised by vivid energy, in the enunciation of great principles, which were exhibited in a manner so impressive, both by His words and actions, that in effect (as the author of 'Ecce Homo' remarks) 'a new continent in the moral globe was discovered' to the view of mankind. But there was a gloomy sadness in His discourses, congenial with the painful situation which He voluntarily embraced. There was 'a joy set before Him,' and for that joy He 'endured the cross, despising the shame;' but, during His life, He carried the cross, and bore the shame, and was misunderstood by all, both friends and enemies. The reticence in His disclosures (which was doubtless a part of His self-denial) was so remarkable that He Himself said, 'It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. . . . Howbeit, when He the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth.' The Saviour is Himself essentially the Comforter, in a pre-eminent sense, because it is through Him that error, depravity, and woe are succeeded by truth, holiness, and joy. But He did

not assume the mission of removing the 'horror of great darkness' which oppresses the intellect of Humanity, in regard to the permanent destinies of the intelligent universe, by cheering declarations during His life. He exhibited the intensity of that everlasting fire, and the poignant agonies inflicted by the worm, the adder, or serpent—striking and impressive emblems of the undying pangs occasioned by sin, in its action on immortal spirits, which can never extinguish the torturing flames, or heal the festering ulcer, and cannot even check their progressive virulence and destructive influence. His energetic voice awoke Humanity from its delusive slumbers and false estimates of moral principles; and revealed the ghastly sores of mental perversity and moral turpitude, which, like an universal pestilence, threatened to convert this fair earth into a vast lazaret-house of squalid and loathsome corruption, degradation, and anguish. His strongest denunciations were against those who professed to be the physicians of the soul, the teachers of salutary doctrines; but who aggravated the moral distemper, and rendered their disciples twofold more the children of hell than themselves. The Saviour laboured and strove, suffered and died, that the Creation might be delivered from the mountain loads of depravity, darkness, and misery which crushed its wholesome energies, and vitiated all its active powers. But He did not solace Himself by undertaking the delightful office of unfolding the grandeur and glory which would result from His self-sacrifice. He manifested the

compassionate and sympathetic tenderness of His nature towards the poor and humble, the simple-minded and helpless, the despised and forsaken ; and made a radical change in the whole form and structure of human notions respecting the true features of benevolence and kindness. But He did not remove the thick veil which shrouded from human perceptions the glorious vista of futurity, the harmonious empire of light, purity, and love, which would gradually gather within its hallowed precincts all the intelligence and moral sensibility of the universe, and would constitute the real cosmos of intellectual and spiritual excellence, adorned with physical beauty and magnificence, beyond the loftiest conceptions of created faculties. The Saviour vividly delineated the fearful action of sin but did not clearly make known the triumphant energy of moral good, although He depicted in strong colours the fierce conflicts between opposing principles, and the turmoil, confusion, and suffering which those conflicts would occasion. He distinctly stated, that a full revelation would be given after His departure ; and it is therefore our duty to seek for a clear manifestation of the purposes of Divine wisdom and goodness in that ulterior revelation.

The declarations of the Saviour, supposed to refer to a future life, are chiefly of a figurative nature. I believe that, from the figures employed, we may derive some conceptions of essential realities, moral features, and substantial results, but not of forms, modes of being, and details. The

habit which has prevailed hitherto, of indulging in materialistic conceptions of a distinct and definite nature, has, I doubt not, been very misleading, although perhaps human beings are not at present capable of viewing those elevated topics in a more spiritual way. I suppose our ideas in regard to the condition of disembodied spirits are not more accurate than those entertained by a man born blind concerning the act of vision. Nor are we competent to form any reliable notions respecting the difference between a natural body and a spiritual body (1 Cor. xv. 44). When our Saviour adopts a more narrative style there is an apparent mingling of earthly events with those of a future life, which renders it difficult to discriminate. The writer of the pamphlet on 'Forgiveness after Death' seems to think that Matt. xxiv. and xxv., as well as the parallel passages in the other Evangelists, refer throughout to earthly events, and not to those in the invisible world. He says: 'The real question for the pious reader and interpreter cannot be any longer which verses are to be referred to one coming and which to another; but, how far can we trace in the events of that age a real fulfilment of this whole prophecy? I do not deny that there will be much difficulty in giving a literal fulfilment to all the expressions applied in Scripture to the coming of the Son of Man. Still less do I deny that we, of these later ages, are warranted in looking for a yet future judgment. But I do contend that our business with passages like these in Matt. xxv. 31-46, is to



trace their relation to the Divine dealings with men at the close of the Jewish dispensation and of the old world. Approaching this scene from such a point of view, or indeed from any point of view, we might reasonably see in it something of a *dramatic* character. Few interpreters would contend that the scenery is a literal transcript of fact. If it is not, who is to determine the exact degree of licence to be permitted in the explaining of it? But we need not ask for licence; we may desire to do full justice to every word of this written picture, if we accept it as setting forth, in its own manner, the strict *principles* upon which the Son of Man did then judge the old world, and always will judge nations, churches, and individual men.' I have derived some useful suggestions from the foregoing remarks. But I do not think it was the design of the Saviour, in the chapters to which the writer refers, or in His discourses in general, to delineate earthly events in their historical aspect. One of His leading objects, I think, was to give a vivid picture, in symbolical terms, of the working of the new *régime*, called the Kingdom of Heaven, and to afford intimations of the principles on which His spiritual rule would be conducted. That new system came into visible and powerful operation before the generation then living had passed away; and they witnessed and participated in the turmoil, excitement, virulent opposition, and stirring up of fierce passions, which were aroused when dogmas and principles were exhibited at complete variance with the maxims, modes of thought, customs, and practices of the

Jewish and Heathen world. The Saviour's language is intended for the instruction of all ages, and the depth and wide extent of its meaning will become progressively understood and appreciated, as Christians advance in moral and spiritual knowledge. It is worthy of particular notice, that in Matthew xxv. 31-46, which is generally supposed to refer to the last judgment, very impressive lessons are conveyed, on a theme which may be said to exhibit the harmony between the Law and the Gospel. It is the same as that inculcated by two Apostles in the words: 'He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. . . . Love is the fulfilling of the law' (Rom. xiii. 8, 10); and again, 'He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him' (1 John iv. 16). Now it seems to me a very extraordinary circumstance, that in this very passage, Matt. xxv. 31-46, which is generally considered as announcing a hopeless, endless, unchanging doom of misery for multitudes, the grand ruling principle of the kingdom of heaven is emphatically declared to be love. I am surprised that intelligent Christians should apparently remain insensible to the striking incongruity of supposing that the Saviour designed to instil benignant, kindly, softened feelings, by threats of inflicting cruel tortures. To illustrate the incongruity, I will imagine that the Apostle John was the governor of Patmos, instead of being a prisoner there, and that, when his benevolent voice reiterated the mild and touching precept, 'Little children, love one another,' he was accustomed to add, with

a change of tone and expression of visage, 'If you do not, I will have your flesh torn out with red-hot pincers.' I venture to submit the opinion that this strikingly impressive passage does not refer particularly to the events of earth, or of a future life, but to the whole system of the Saviour's rule, under the new *régime* called the Kingdom of Heaven. It teaches us that love is the all-conquering principle in that kingdom, and that malignity is the essence of moral evil. There must be never-ending turmoil, disorder, and misery in this world and the next, until counteracted, removed, and transformed by the gentle and yet irresistible potency of this pre-eminent characteristic of the Divine Nature, which is to be diffused throughout Creation. Do we not see that the absence of love brings never-ending punishment on nations, churches, and individuals? Look at the course of human affairs. The earth yields bountiful and diversified supplies, adequate for the sustenance and comfort of much larger populations than exist at present; and yet we find multitudes of the virtuous and industrious in danger of starvation. One family has 20*l.* a year, and another 20*l.* an hour. The lawgivers deliberate, but can do nothing. Meetings are held of those who are called by some writer, 'well-to-do Philistines,' but they only bring forward weak palliatives. The everlasting punishment goes on, causing much anxiety and perturbation; and nothing can stop it but the active operation of love. Its magic power alone can diminish and remove social evils,

and distribute the bounteous and unfailing supplies which God bestows on His creatures, so as to ensure their collective and individual welfare. It is the same with churches. The absence of love blinds the moral vision, and puts a film on the spiritual sense. Almost every scriptural declaration is misconstrued, and the God who is the Author of every kindly sentiment, the Fountain of tenderness and goodness, is regarded as more cruel and pitiless than Moloch. Never-ceasing restlessness, confusion, turmoil, and mutual bitterness are the natural results, and infidelity enters even into the temple of God. They who ought to be the lights of the world, diffuse an increase of darkness. It would be useless to dwell on the torments which the absence of love occasions to individuals; and the analogies of earth in that respect may enable us to form some idea of the never-ending punishment which must fall on spirits destitute of love, when brought face to face with immortality, and deprived of all illusions, shams, and deceits. It appears to me that, in this impressive passage or parable, the Saviour declares in effect that, to be destitute of love, which is the essence of the Gospel, is to be necessarily excluded from the kingdom of heaven, and to be the prey of unceasing misery, as a natural consequence, and not a forcible infliction. The great touchstone, criterion, Shibboleth, indicating the radical distinction between the sheep and the goats, is the principle of love. The kingdom of heaven is set up on earth, in proportion as this

magic, all-conquering power is found in the church.

It is interesting to observe that, in this parable, the sole ground of condemnation mentioned is the absence of love, or an enlarged principle of benevolence. Those who were pronounced accursed might, for aught that appears, have possessed qualities entitling them to eulogistic epitaphs. It was the same with the rich man, at whose gate Lazarus was laid full of sores. He is represented as being influenced by family affection, even beyond the confines of this life. The Saviour says: 'Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.' Who are these, called in a previous verse 'my brethren'? I believe the Saviour refers to all the members of the human race. He is, in effect, acting as a brother to all. He died for all. The rule laid down by the Apostle Paul is: 'Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.' The Apostle John puts the case in a way calculated to awaken serious reflection among Christians:— 'Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?' The mitigation and removal of social ills and miseries will come from the influence of Christianity, if it comes at all. Let Christians employ their wealth according to the principles of the Gospel; let them recollect that, not only the lust of the flesh, but also the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, are not of the Father,

but are of the world. Let them take a reasonable view of what is required for the comfort and happiness of their own families, and resolutely apply their minds to the responsibility that weighs upon them in reference to the fearful load of misery that exists. Let them review, in a conscientious, humane, and intelligent way, the principles on which they, as capitalists, are dealing with labour, and let them strive to acquire a habit of reflecting on the wants and comforts of labourers and their households, as well as of their own families.\* Looking at the whole subject in a more general way, the thought recurs again and again: 'The earth produces abundantly; why, then, should not all be comfortable and happy?' In times of violence, wilful destruction, and gross ignorance, such a result could not be realised. But we pride ourselves on our advancing intelligence and public spirit; and as the Creator has bestowed a wealth of physical resources to secure this result, we ought to be equal to the supply of sufficient intellectual and moral energy for that purpose. If it were possible to procure for labour a more liberal scale of remuneration, by the spontaneous action of capital, the benefits would be great, even to capital itself,

\* These should be the minimum effects of Christian principles, if conscientiously applied by an ordinary intelligence. But the Saviour requires much more in this parable, as He plainly indicates that those who are under the hallowed influence of love, and therefore belong to His kingdom, will be imbued with the spirit of self-sacrifice, and manifest it in their conduct. When this potent force begins really to operate in the Christian Church, the aspect of the social fabric will speedily undergo a wondrous change.

as there would be largely increased consumption of all articles, whether produced by the landed or manufacturing interest. Then, if an enlightened public sentiment should succeed in placing a stigma of disgrace on idleness in all ranks, even as it is doing in regard to drunkenness, we might see a wondrous change in our social fabric.

I think the parables of the Saviour ought to be interpreted on broad principles, and that we may arrive at such interpretations, and free ourselves from narrow-minded and contracted ideas, by having recourse to the ulterior revelations to which the Saviour so distinctly referred, and by a careful study of the book of Providence. If we were to view the declarations of our Lord alone, independently of those supplementary disclosures, our notions respecting the most important points of the Gospel scheme would necessarily remain confused, imperfect, and restricted. It is only by comparing them with the statements of the Apostles, that we can acquire wide, comprehensive, and harmonious views ; and we are bound, in obedience to the injunctions of the Saviour, to consider those ulterior revelations as an important and indispensable part of a great whole, benignly given for the instruction of Humanity. His own declarations taken alone, although clothed with unrivalled energy and power, might justify us in believing that the unparalleled self-sacrifice prompted by Divine love would produce great and yet limited results—wide and extensive, but not universal, benefits. We might find grounds for the sad con-

viction, that the baleful sway of moral evil would never terminate, that the agonies which it inflicts would never cease. But the full disclosures in regard to the Divine purposes of wisdom and mercy, which were shed on the earth after His death and resurrection, dissipate the thick clouds of obscurity which veiled the effulgence of the Creator's tenderness and compassion, and exhibit Him as the benign Father of the spirits of all flesh, the wise, firm, and benevolent Ruler, whose enlightened measures of correction and restoration embrace all His creatures. When I endeavour to interpret the strong language of the Saviour upon those principles, I derive the most vivid conceptions of the intensely noxious properties of moral evil, and the hopeless condition of those who are enslaved and perverted by its bondage. I perceive clearly that all the boasted energy of human reason would be completely impotent to remove, or even to loosen, a single fetter, to restore sight to the blind, to pour light on bewildering mists of error, to heal the ulcerating sore, to stem the torrent of depravity and corruption, to soften the virulent malignity, to allay the undying anguish. I draw the most impressive conclusion, that the supposed inherent capacities of Humanity, even though aided by the collective energies of all created intelligence and moral strength, would not suffice to deliver a captive soul from the subtle and tenacious bonds of sin, or to mitigate the raging tortures of the flames which it enkindles. But I also derive the cheering conviction, that what is



impossible with men, or even with angels, is possible with God. I rejoice as I behold the vast and adequate measures for solving the most intricate and apparently invincible problems; and I hail, with indescribable gladness, the clear manifestation of the Divine purpose, to apply those measures for the complete extinction of moral evil, and the universal deliverance of the Creation from its baneful dominion.

Some good men, who are oppressed with intolerable disquietude by the fearful and repulsive dogma that depravity and misery will never terminate, are striving to find relief in the supposition, that those who do not participate in the blessings of redemption will be annihilated; that is, that their existence will be completely extinguished. This supposition is monstrous in itself, if we take into view the practical consequences to which it leads; and if it really affords relief to human minds, it is one of the most impressive protests against the horror inspired by the orthodox dogmas that can be imagined. It is a relief somewhat similar to that which a man might have by cherishing the intention of committing suicide, in order to escape capital punishment. Let us compare the two classes of opinions in their practical results. The advocates of the one maintain that all those of the human race who have not died in infancy, and have not obtained a spiritual union with God in this life, will exist for ever in unutterable woe and depravity. If we admit that this is

in harmony with the declarations of the Bible, and then reflect on the past history and present condition of mankind, we can hardly suppose that even one adult in every hundred has escaped this awful fate. The advocates of the other class of opinions maintain, that the existence of this immense majority of the human race will not be endless, but will terminate at some undefined period. They believe that it will continue after this life, so that they admit the separate vitality of the spirit when no longer united to the body. The only object stated by most for the existence after this life of those who are to be annihilated, seems to be that they may suffer an adequate amount of punishment; and, if I understand the theory correctly, the less a man has sinned, the shorter will be his existence after this life. Some, however, assign a gracious motive for the prolongation of existence to those who have not become acquainted with the way of salvation while living on earth. The Rev. W. Kerr supposes that 'the light of the glorious Gospel of the grace of God will be made to shine upon every individual,' either in this life or the next. As regards the heathen he says, 'why not after death, in the life that follows death, and which intervenes between the dissolution of the body and the final judgment?' I do not see on what ground he restricts this 'why not' to the heathen, as there are multitudes in countries called Christian who have never become acquainted with the Gospel, and have not the faintest conception of the glad tidings. The

supposition that the Gospel may be made to shine upon the heathen after death, must mean, in plain language, that a process of enlightenment and sanctification will be carried on in a future life. If so, this 'why not' may be extended indefinitely, and it may be asked with great reason, why not apply this beneficent process to all intelligent beings who are in a state of darkness and depravity?

But most of the believers in annihilation seem to be placidly content with the supposition that all those who have not known and loved God in this life, whether living in heathen countries, or those denominated Christian, will be entirely destroyed; that is to say, will become completely extinct, after suffering the measure of punishment due to their ill-doings and iniquities. They appear to be honestly impressed with the humanity and tenderness of this view, as affording no grounds for hostile criticism to infidels and intelligent heathen, and as claiming the complacent acquiescence of mankind. They evidently regard this sweeping destruction of all but a fraction of the intellectual faculties and moral sensibilities of Adam's race, as a measure in complete harmony with the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God—perfectly consistent with the supreme attribute of love. They calmly and confidently bring this catalogue of horrors forward, as part of the scheme of redemption. This wholesale destruction, according to one author (Rev. S. Minton), is a preliminary measure to the 'reconciliation of all things.' He evidently does not perceive that such an idea con-

verts the word reconciliation into cruel mockery, and transforms the Gospel, although announced as 'good tidings of great joy,' into a fearful disclosure of perdition and ruin. I do not think, as far as my knowledge goes, that any of the Pagan nations have attributed to their most ferocious deities a course of administration, a system of government, more revolting to the principles of reason, expediency, consistency, and goodness. Let a missionary put all that in a clear, straightforward shape, undisguised by clouds of verbosity, and let him go and proclaim this Gospel to the heathen, and he will see whether their benighted minds are able to appreciate the immense superiority of such declarations to their own trembling, groping efforts to discern some glimmering of light and hope, while pondering on the impenetrable darkness of futurity.

I cannot help expressing myself strongly against ideas which, to my mind, are full of horror, and founded on an entire misconception of the Gospel scheme of mercy and goodness. Yet I am compelled to admit, that these views are less revolting than the opinions called orthodox. When I examine the arguments employed in support of these frightful statements, they appear to me to consist of misinterpretations of Scripture, and false inferences drawn from undoubted truths. The advocates of these views say truly that the human spirit is not essentially or inherently immortal, as there is only one self-sustaining Being, who alone hath immortality; and all other ex-

istences depend absolutely on Him, and could not endure a moment if He were to withdraw His life-giving support. But I can see no scriptural ground for the allegation that immortality belongs only to those who are united to Christ in this life. Continuance of being after the death of the body is, to my mind, plainly declared to be the lot of all the children of men. Our Saviour spoke of 'a resurrection of life and a resurrection of condemnation;' and the Apostle said, 'As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.' The general, almost universal, consciousness of mankind is a strong evidence of immortality. This consciousness was developed into something like certainty among the great body of the Jews, before the Advent of the Saviour; and I do not believe that they derived it from the Heathen, as is alleged by some, but rather that the best ideas of Heathen philosophers were obtained from Jewish sources. It appears to me that the discourses of our Saviour indicate the doctrine of immortality for all, as forcibly as possible; and there would, I think, be very little meaning in the earnest admonitions and exhortations of the Apostles, unless addressed to men who were destined to an immortal existence. It is said that Jesus Christ 'hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.' I understand that to refer, not so much to merely prolonged or endless continuance of being, as to the proper and real life of the spirit, which cannot be said to live when 'dead in trespasses and sins;'

but only when the image of God in which it was created is restored, and there is vitality in the exercise of its noblest faculties, capacities, and affections. Eternal life is declared to be the knowledge of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. This blessed life—this only true life—is obtained by union with Christ. The words ‘life’ and ‘alive’ are employed in several senses in the Bible, and the words ‘death’ and ‘dead’ in a still greater number. The following are some instances in regard to the latter:—Rom. vi. 8, 11: ‘If we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. . . . Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.’ Col. iii. 3: ‘Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.’ 2 Tim. ii. 11: ‘If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him.’ Rom. vii. 4, 9: ‘Dead to the law by the body of Christ. . . . I was alive without the law. . . . Sin revived and I died.’ Ephes. ii. 1: ‘Dead in trespasses and sins.’ Rom. viii. 6: ‘To be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.’ The believers in annihilation bring forward a number of passages, chiefly from the Old Testament, to show that the wicked shall perish or be destroyed, and it is alleged that extinction of existence is intended. It is doubtful to my mind whether any of the passages taken from the Old Testament refer to the invisible world; and I feel persuaded that an intelligent and unbiassed person may assign a reasonable and natural expla-

nation to every passage brought forward, without supposing it to mean annihilation or extinction of being. Eternal death does not signify a cessation of existence. It is a continuance of existence without the knowledge and love of God. It is the opposite of eternal life. It is the death—the living death of the spirit—which becomes withered, paralysed, deformed, degraded, bestial, and fiendish.

There are some considerations, derived partly from analogies, and partly from scriptural intimations, which present themselves to my mind while reflecting on these interesting topics. The action of sin is deleterious to physical life; and I have sometimes endeavoured to conjecture whether its natural tendency must not be to sap the vitality of spirits. It is said in the Proverbs, ‘A merry heart doeth good like a medicine; but a broken spirit drieth the bones.’ So it may be truly asserted that envy, malignity, cupidity, as well as discontent, deep grief, and fierce anger, injure the vital organs; while the emotions of kindness, charity, content, and cheerfulness benefit the bodily health. The observance of great moral principles has a conservative effect on the durability of human races, and the habitual violation of those principles causes races to disappear. Now, if I imagine that there is a certain constitution of things established by the Creator, in the spiritual as well as in the material world, and that this constitution of things is upheld by His all-pervading energy, so that causes and effects will always

maintain their relative action and influence. I should be inclined to suppose, from the analogies which my present existence supplies, that if a spirit is placed in a condition of depravity, malignity, despair, and anguish, always increasing, with no alleviation and no hope, that spirit must gradually wear out. It would be constantly exercised in a way foreign to its constituent properties—adverse to all its appropriate tendencies. If spirits have been created in the image of God, it must, in a subordinate degree, be as unsuitable and unnatural for them to experience malignity and despair, as it would be for the exalted Being in whose image they were created. Can that which is unnatural, strained, and forced last for ever? I do not believe it could, unless sustained by an extraordinary exertion of the Creator's power. It seems to me that to uphold a spirit in endless existence, while subjected to the destructive influences of sin, would be like an effort to confer a long life on a man who is taking deadly poison every day. Both would be possible to God; but I apprehend that, so long as the constitution of things is upheld which God has established, both may be regarded as impossible. If we view the subject in this manner, it appears far more probable that there will be a wholesale destruction or extinction of intelligent existences, than an endless prolongation of any in a state of depravity and anguish.

But, in our reasonings and efforts to form conjectures respecting the invisible world, the ana-



logies furnished by the present life cannot be relied upon as sure guides. If we believe that God has given us a revelation on the subject, we must draw our knowledge from its disclosures. To my mind, the Bible does indicate that sin is destructive to every kind of life—physical, intellectual, and spiritual; and the phraseology I find therein confirms my impression that creatures could not exist for ever, unless delivered from the bondage of corruption. The most striking images in regard to the condition of the wicked in a future life, are symbols of destruction—fire and the worm. Having this impression, I agree so far with believers in annihilation, that I think the statements of the Bible support the idea that extinction of being must ensue, unless the destructive influences of moral evil are removed. But I am convinced, and it has been my effort to show, that the Bible clearly indicates the Divine purpose to free all the intelligent creation from those destructive influences. I fully agree with the believers in annihilation that immortality, as well as spiritual life, can be obtained only by union with Him who is ‘the resurrection and the life,’ ‘the bread of life,’ ‘the way, the truth, and the life.’ But this union will be accomplished ultimately in regard to all the children of Adam, and the declaration will be literally fulfilled: ‘As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.’ I say ‘literally,’ because I entertain the joyful persuasion that the gracious declarations of the Bible will never fall short of what appears to be stated, but will be carried out

with an overflowing fulness of completion—never in a stinted measure. Even a munificent earthly prince would rather give more than he promised than appear to give less. Infinitely greater is the munificence of the bountiful Sovereign, ‘that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.’ ‘For if, through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.’

We live in an age when, as the Bishop of Oxford said in a charge delivered at the end of 1866, ‘every opinion, every institution, almost every fact in politics, in history, in morals, and in religion is being assailed.’ The doctrine of everlasting punishment is gradually becoming intolerable; so much so, indeed, that one clergyman (Rev. W. Kerr, on ‘Everlasting Punishment’) declares: ‘I am firmly convinced that the doctrine, as commonly held and taught, is not believed by any who are capable of understanding, or who bestow any thought at all upon it. . . . I will even go further and assert, that no one ever yet did truly and really believe in the doctrine of the eternity of hell torment.’ As to its effect on himself he says: ‘The author’s mind had been long and bitterly exercised by the awful doctrine of everlasting punishment. . . . It proved an insupportable burden to him.’ Another clergyman (Rev. E. White, on the ‘Theory of Missions’) asserts: ‘There is but little fear of “judgment to

come " left in the world. This is a statement which everyone can verify, and it is a fact which, I believe, chiefly results from the common doctrine, which each man judges to be incredible in reference to himself and his immediate connections.' In another place he says: 'Believers in Christianity maintain their faith in such doctrines mostly by a decided habit of not thinking upon them.' A third clergyman (the Rev. S. Minton, on the 'Glory of Christ') declares that 'The theory of transubstantiation does not so directly blaspheme the Majesty of heaven as the theory of eternal evil. The one charges God with performing a stupendous piece of jugglery, the other accuses Him of infinite cruelty.' Yet these clergymen, who appear to be thoroughly convinced that the doctrine of eternal punishments is really and truly believed by very few, do not hesitate to bring forward theories of wholesale destruction, which are, I think, equally opposed to the tendencies of thought in our age. If it is considered justifiable, and even obligatory, for missionaries to assail the mythological systems of the heathen, by showing the immorality and cruelty of the doctrines taught, the system of Christianity, as presented by its advocates, may with equal justice be subjected to searching criticism. Supposing that the English Government, or that of Russia, were to take possession of some district in the East, and to announce that it would be absolutely indispensable to slaughter three-fourths or half of the population, as a preliminary measure to the establishment of order, harmony, and

general content,—would not such an allegation excite universal horror and detestation? Can the believers in annihilation really suppose that at a period when the opponents of capital punishments are constantly increasing, the common sense of mankind will receive with acquiescence the monstrous declaration that the Governor of the universe will find it necessary to sweep out of existence the greater part of the human race, or any part of it, in order to carry out His purpose of reconciling all things unto Himself? Does not every Christian meet with proofs within his own cognisance, that there is no depth of perversity, degradation, darkness, malignity, and corruption, which may not be removed and changed into light, purity, and love by the wondrous efficacy of Divine influence? An eminent writer of the present day, who appears to be strongly impressed with the infinite and immeasurable depths of Divine love, said, in a private letter, in reference to the extent of effective benevolence contemplated by the Gospel scheme: ‘I always feel that, if I do not despair for myself, I cannot, must not despair for any man, here and anywhere. I think, in saying that, I have answered your question about the degree of my hope for mankind.’ Now I would ask, whether any intelligent man, who has the hope of his own personal salvation, can really believe in the necessity or expediency of extinguishing the existence of other beings, who are essentially the same as himself in their intellectual and moral constitution?

A great change has gradually passed over the

sentiments and feelings of the civilised world since the period of the Reformation. War is no longer regarded as a noble occupation for manly vigour and lofty energy, but as a direful evil, to be avoided as much as possible. Yet I think the courage of the human race has not diminished, either of an active or passive nature. There is no abatement in the spirit of enterprise, capable of meeting danger without dismay; and the records of our own days furnish instances of heroic endurance, impetuous valour, and cool daring, not surpassed by the exploits of former times. We find, likewise, that civilised rulers ostentatiously profess benevolent principles of government, and anxiously endeavour to justify any appearance of harshness. To what causes are we to attribute the softened feelings, which cannot endure a criminal code of bloody rigour, and are no longer able to gaze with the calm tolerance of former ages on spectacles of violence and cruelty? Rationalism claims to be the mighty agent that has effected the wondrous transformation. I have endeavoured to show that its pretensions to be an initiatory source of light and benevolence cannot be admitted. The repression of ferocity commenced as soon as the Sacred Volume was liberated from its long captivity, and not before; and its circulation among the masses has produced the changes of sentiment in regard to human relations to which I referred in the first chapter. If the Bible proceeds from God, and its principles and precepts diffuse a softening influence on the rela-

tions of man to man, we may, I think, fairly conclude that its great Author has gracious intentions towards His creatures. We are not warranted in drawing from its pages theories of general destruction, if there are numerous intimations of benevolent designs contemplating universal happiness. If the resources of illumination and sanctification which the Gospel exhibits are plainly adequate to utilise all the intellectual and moral energy which the Creator has brought into existence, so as to form a part of the grand cosmos which is being constructed, it appears monstrous to suppose that any portion of it will be blotted out of the book of creation, and ignominiously rejected as worthless, and incapable of serving a good purpose. Some wise man said, that the worst use to which you can put a man is to hang him. The belief in the truth of that sentiment is gaining ground, in spite of the limited power of human associations to prevent and repress criminality, and to reclaim and reform perversity and depravity. How much more must such a sentiment be true in regard to the government of God, with the immense intellectual and moral resources at its disposal? I would venture to express my unhesitating conviction, that to proclaim the wholesale destruction of intelligence and emotional sensibility, is to depreciate the noblest works of the Creator; to implant feelings of dread and suspicion towards the great Source of light and goodness; to intensify the coldness, selfishness, and malignity which sin has diffused; and to obstruct the benignant action of Divine

love in subduing the thoughts and affections of created beings.

What a contrast is presented by the soul-elevating, love-inspiring idea, that the vast measures of the Divine administration really and truly contemplate the reconciliation of all things to God! If I apply to that idea the practical tests to which I subjected the fearful dogmas of systematic theology, I find a result eminently satisfactory to my intellectual and emotional faculties. What impression is produced in regard to the character and purposes of God? Does such an idea exalt the grandeur of the Gospel scheme of mercy, or depreciate it? Can we discern in a boundless plan of universal benevolence, effected through Divine self-sacrifices, the inviolable maintenance of the Creator's justice, equity, and truth, and a pre-eminent display of His love? Is the wisdom of God manifested in the wondrous measures which are solving the most intricate and difficult problems; which are forming a cosmos of intellectual and moral excellence out of a chaos of darkness and depravity, and converting even the insidious and deadly poison of moral evil into a means of salutary discipline? Is the unwavering firmness of God displayed in the inseparable connection established and maintained between sin and sorrow, in the unbending law of causes and consequences, the closely linked chain of mutual influences and interweaving destinies? If we are led to perceive that the sympathetic tenderness of the Creator is

so acutely sensitive that He suffers from every pang that afflicts His creatures, will not such a perception have a tendency to awaken responsive affection towards the beneficent Author of our being? The doctrine of the vicarious death of Christ has been made repulsive to human intelligence, by being represented as a measure for appeasing the wrath of God. But, if we view Christ crucified as 'the power of God and the wisdom of God' — as a Divine self-sacrifice which manifests the ineffable tenderness of the Creator, the effect of that doctrine will be altogether different. If we see therein a powerful means of conquering the malignity which moral evil has engendered and diffused throughout the intelligent Creation, and, at the same time, an impressive homage to the inviolable principles of rectitude which are unflinchingly maintained by the great Sovereign of the universe, will it not appear to us as indeed the power of God and the wisdom of God? Shall we not then see that peace is made through the blood of the Cross, in every sense, and that God is thereby reconciling all things unto Himself? If the human intellect becomes impressed with the self-sacrifices and labours of the Creator to accomplish the most benevolent purposes, without weakening the influence of important and vital principles, will not such a contemplation implant sentiments of veneration and confidence, mingled with admiring love? Will not the Christian feel much stronger inducements to be upright and true, faithful and kind, if



he sees clearly that God upholds those benignant qualities in all the measures of His government, than if his faith in their existence is not strengthened by his intellectual perceptions? If he discerns the elevated plan of God, to conquer evil by moral good, will he not feel more impressively his own responsibility; and will not the most revolting spectacles of brutality, vice, and crime rather awaken strong compassion and earnest efforts, as direful ills to be overcome, than merely inspire disgust and loathing, as something entirely apart from himself, with perhaps an infusion of complacent self-gratulation?

If I apply the test of harmony and consistency to the belief in effective measures leading to the complete triumph of moral good, the result affords an amount of satisfaction which I am unable to obtain from the dogmas of systematic theology. In the writings of the Old Testament, in the providential dealings of God with the children of Abraham, I can discern a preliminary stage of discipline, which has produced important effects, not only in relation to their own instruction, but also in regard to the gradual enlightenment of other important branches of mankind. In the midst of judgments and inflictions, which appear stern and harsh, I can trace the steady and unceasing action of tender wisdom and firm benevolence. The apparent abandonment of almost every portion of the human race to their own devices, and the consequent spread of mental perversity and moral corruption, no longer perplex the mind, as indicating

neglect of His creatures by the great Author of their existence. I am enabled to perceive, amid gross darkness and bewildering confusion, the supervision of consummate wisdom, prompted by enlarged benevolence, over a vast educational plan, designed to prepare ignorance and inexperience for an immortality of safety, happiness, and enlightened freedom. The recognition of a grand purpose of universal good enables me to find harmony and consistency between the sternest denunciations and the most tender intimations of the Sacred Volume; between the hidings of the Creator's presence and the manifestations of His power, His wisdom, and His love. I can perceive that all the attributes of God co-operate, with consistent efficacy, in the magnificent process of evolving order and harmony out of confusion and discord; and that satisfaction is rendered to every great principle of truth, equity, and enlightened benevolence. The dogmas of theologians oblige them to attenuate and explain away numerous passages of Scripture, so as almost to deprive them of any intelligible meaning. But we may find the most impressive significance in every inspired declaration, when we recognise in the Sacred Volume a revelation from the wise, firm, and beneficent Ruler of the universe, the tender and loving Father of all His creatures. If I interpret the forcible and striking language of the Saviour, as spoken by One who assumed the glorious mission of reconciling all things unto God, and seek guidance from the elucidations afforded by the Apostles, to which

the Redeemer Himself referred, I can perceive that the most vivid delineations of the fearful effects of sin are prompted by Divine wisdom, contemplating the universal triumph of moral good. I become impressed by the spirit-stirring words of the Great Teacher, seeking to arouse the torpid faculties of humanity, by unveiling the horrors of the bottomless abyss, into which countless myriads are plunged, through wanton heedlessness as well as deliberate criminality. I discern the most solemn warnings and admonitions, in regard to the noxious properties of sin and the virulent intensity of the moral plague, which is incurable by the collective energies of created wisdom and power. But I am enabled to rejoice in the conviction, that the declarations of the Saviour were intended to promote the great object of universal benevolence, which He came to fulfil, and not to indicate that His glorious purpose would only be partially accomplished.

When we look at great facts, connected with the nature of man and his position on earth, and seek to interpret the lessons they teach, by the elucidations of the Sacred Volume, we may, I think, draw from those facts a concurrent testimony to the operation of a vast plan of universal benevolence. We may perceive that salutary knowledge and moral training cannot easily be acquired by intelligent beings, who individually commence their existence in a state of complete ignorance and inexperience, except by exposure to contingencies and dangers, which place them in contact with solemn realities.

We may trace benevolent wisdom in the stern law of causes and consequences, and of mutual influences, even though its action often brings intense suffering on the innocent, through the misconduct of the guilty. The turmoil of raging and conflicting passions, the bewildering mixture of restraint and liberty, the fearful disorder and confusion of the intellectual and moral faculties—all the perplexing spectacles of misery, gloom, and horror, which have so long oppressed humanity, become invested with a promise of salutary discipline, leading to knowledge of essential differences, an appreciation of the real properties of things, a cognisance of complicated relations, implanting liveliness, depth, and intensity in the thoughts, feelings, and susceptibilities. Even the alienation, separation, isolation, division, and mutual enmity of various races of mankind, during so many ages, afford the prospect of advantage, under the presiding control of the great Supervisor. The contracted wisdom of man seeks to establish uniformity, heedless of its inevitable tendency to perpetuate error and to dwarf the human faculties. But the enlarged wisdom of the Creator evolves diversities of opinions, customs, sensibilities, and ideas, as the best means of expansion, flexibility, and progress, and the most effective process to develop the full stature of humanity, in its intellectual and emotional capacities. A feeling of awe will steal over us, when we reflect on the fearful risk of overwhelming ruin with which the entrance of moral evil has threatened the universe.

But we may rejoice in the benignant ray of light shed on the dark enigma by the intimations of the Bible, and may recognise, with admiring gratitude, the wondrous alchemy which draws good out of evil, and implants intellectual and moral vigour through the operation of an insidious and deadly poison. We may thus arrive at the joyful conviction that the Volumes of Revelation, Providence, and Nature all unite, with harmony and consistency, in proclaiming the benevolent designs of the Creator towards His intelligent creatures.

It is, to my mind, a strong argument against the doctrine of eternal punishments, that it was held without difficulty in the dark ages, when the Sacred Volume was scarcely known, but has become increasingly repugnant after the intellectual atmosphere has been illuminated by its free circulation. We now find that it is not only revolting to men of intelligence, who do not recognise the Divine authority of the Bible, and yet have participated in the enlightening influence of its wise maxims and declarations, but to many thoughtful and pious students of that hallowed book. I believe the published attacks on it by Christians have mostly proceeded from clergymen. I do not think that the most strenuous advocates of this doctrine would be prepared to express an undoubting conviction that its effect upon the intellects and hearts of men has been of a beneficial nature. They would hardly venture to assert that love to God and love to man, or even a hatred

to sin, have been increased by a hearty belief in its truth. No one supposes that the infliction of death for crime among men, whether dealt out for almost every offence, or only for those of the gravest character, has ever tended to inspire a love of virtue. There is probably now a majority of the intelligent part of the community who even doubt whether the deterring influence of capital punishments is of much force. We are beginning to look to an entirely different order of means, the object of which is to attack the sources of evil. So it is with our theological views. The measures which seem fitted to operate upon the roots of moral evil are easily accepted by our reason, as being in harmony with scriptural declarations, and with the most elevated conceptions we can form of the Divine character. Those which exhibit no adaptation for that purpose appear incongruous, and we cannot believe in them with the hearty acquiescence felt by our fathers. On the other hand, the idea of universal happiness and goodness is congenial to the human mind in all ages, and under all circumstances, and has given rise to many pleasing dreams and fancies respecting a golden age of primeval innocence. Those who believe in a coming millennium on the earth, imagine that all its inhabitants will be under the influence of light, purity, and love. They introduce no dark shadows of vice and misery into the delightful picture. Descartes endeavoured to prove the existence of a self-sustaining, perfect Being, from the sensibility of the human soul to its own

incompleteness and weakness, and the need it feels of being able to rest on One who has unfailing, unconquerable strength and wisdom. The belief in the immortality of the spirit and in the freedom of the will derives strong support from the innate consciousness of mankind. In like manner, as I have already remarked, the doctrine of universal restoration—of universal holiness and happiness—is also foreshadowed by the aspirations of humanity. Our moral instincts shrink from the idea of misery and depravity which are never to be alleviated and removed. We feel that we could not be happy if hopeless anguish and corruption were within the reach of our cognisance. The educational training of the most delicate moral sensibilities, which has been introduced by Christianity, strengthens and intensifies those instincts. The Christian is being taught to sympathise with sorrow, to strive for its alleviation, and to seek the mitigation and extinction of moral evil, which is its chief cause. The delineations of heaven given by theologians do violence to those irrepressible instincts, and therefore make very little impression on the minds of Christians. They represent the redeemed as destined to pass a happy eternity under circumstances in which the noblest and most elevated impulses we are able to conceive are to be repressed. They are to be spectators of hopeless woe and depravity, but any effort to alleviate is to be forbidden; and they are to acquiesce with joyful serenity in the prohibition. Let us endeavour to imagine a millennium on earth of general

goodness and happiness, but disfigured by gloomy dungeons of vice and suffering, which are never to be visited by the messengers of mercy and benevolence, and we shrink from the contemplation. We feel that the general goodness and happiness would be marred, and that a disorganisation must ensue. Those who are good and kind must strive against moral evil and its attendant misery, or they will cease to be good and kind. These considerations have irresistible force on my mind, and establish a conviction that it would be impossible to maintain goodness and happiness throughout eternity, in co-existence with depravity and misery. In the 'Bampton Lectures' for 1867, the influence of Christianity in producing benevolent sentiments is forcibly exhibited. The attention it gives to the individual man, the jealous sensitiveness over human life and human suffering, are strongly contrasted with the absence of sympathetic pity, which was one of the most painful characteristics of Heathenism, and is still found to be so. The duty of doing good, which, as the author of 'Ecce Homo' says, 'may properly receive the distinctively Christian name of charity,' has been so vividly manifested by the example and precepts of the Saviour and the teachings of the Apostles, that it has been powerfully impressed on the mind of the community, and constitutes an essential feature of modern civilisation. The human intellect, in spite of the counteractive influence of selfishness, is able to see the beauty of kindness, compassion, and benevolence; and any theological



representations which do violence to the delicate moral sensibilities, developed and intensified by Christianity, are calculated to produce infidelity. Byron had a noble mind, and fine emotional sensibilities; and if he had perceived that the measures of the Divine government were designed and adapted to accomplish the permanent welfare of the intelligent universe, his sentiments towards his Maker would have been very different from what they were, and his lofty genius might have expatiated on the sublime theme, instead of gazing into a deepening abyss of depravity and malignity. We may discover in the writings of many eminent men, poets, and philosophers, the same bitterness of feeling, aroused and provoked by the fearful misconceptions which systematic theology has inculcated. In the 'Bampton Lectures,' to which I have just alluded, there is a passage cited from the writings of a living philosopher, expressing sentiments concerning the Divine government which appear to me substantially the same as those put into the mouth of Lucifer by Byron. In both cases the defiance uttered may be said to be against an imaginary being, depicted by systematic theology, or against a calumnious representation of the wise, firm, and benevolent Sovereign of the universe. But I think the philosopher, who is professedly a calm and searching investigator of great moral questions, ought to have patiently and intelligently examined for himself the only sources from which any knowledge of the Creator can be obtained—that is, the Books of Nature, Providence,

and Revelation; and if he had done so, I can hardly suppose that he could have penned such sentences. Whatever degree of blame we may attach to such bitter and irreverent declarations, they are, to my mind, unmistakably sincere and earnest protests of human nature against theological dogmas, which not only make the Divine government appear deficient in wisdom, justice, and goodness, but give it an aspect of fearful cruelty.

What different conceptions do we obtain of the spiritual world, and the momentous events of futurity, if we assign the most obvious meaning to the glorious announcement that 'all things will be reconciled to God by Christ;' that He will 'gather together in one all things in Christ;' that 'all things shall be subdued unto Him.' We see no reversal of the blessed injunction, 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep,' issuing from the gracious Being whose pre-eminent characteristic is love. We perceive no repression of noble impulses, no prohibition against energetic efforts for the extension of the kingdom of light, and the conquering sway of moral good over moral evil. We listen with awe to the impressive language which depicts inconceivable duration and fearful intensity of suffering and depravity. But the horror is mitigated, and hopeful thoughts are awakened, by the vista of a distant future, dimly and yet distinctly manifested, when sin and sorrow shall be no more. The fancy is permitted to roam in a region of mental and moral

activity, where repose is not inertion, but the ineffable blessedness of resting firmly, confidingly, lovingly on the Divine strength, wisdom, and goodness. We trace the generous ardour and the noble daring, which had their birthplace on earth, expanding into fuller development amid illimitable fields of action. We are gladdened by the perception that the hallowed joy of heaven over repentant sinners, of which our Saviour permitted us to have a glimpse, will have constant additions to its depth and fulness, during countless ages, as the kingdom of light wins new trophies, and the fearful shadows of gloom and darkness are gradually dispersed, until the whole universe owns the undisputed sway of purity and love. We are allowed to cherish the consolatory idea that all the kindly bonds of friendship and affection formed on earth will be finally and eternally renewed, although an incalculable duration of gloomy darkness and misery may separate the sons of light from many who were dearly loved. We are cheered by the prospect, that, although the dispensation of sorrow must endure so long as moral evil exists, and must penetrate into the most elevated regions of holiness and love, yet that a time will come, when 'God shall wipe away all tears' from the eyes of men, 'and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain;' when the whole creation shall exult in the conviction, that 'the former things are passed away.' The redeemed will not be able to deliver the objects of their earthly affection from the depths

of malignity and corruption into which they are plunged by their careless or wilful trifling with the impulses of sin. Whatever power they may exercise will be delegated and not inherent. The angels have doubtless learnt, by the experience of ages, that their utmost efforts to free human spirits from the bonds of darkness and depravity were fruitless unless accompanied by Divine energy. But they have perhaps been constantly permitted to use them, often with a sense of disappointment, and sometimes with hallowed joy, yet with a gradually increasing conviction that moral good would ultimately triumph over moral evil. We may imagine that the experience of the redeemed will be the same. They will be permitted to co-operate in the great measures for the extinction of evil; and their perception of its intensity and virulence will constantly acquire additional force, as new proofs are afforded that it can only be vanquished by Divine energy. They may even, as the angels, find again and again that their utmost efforts are unavailing to soften malignity and to dissipate darkness. But their disappointments will not be embittered by despondency, nor be followed by the languor of inertia. Such disappointments will be the means of salutary discipline, expanding the noble thoughts and feelings of which they acquired the rudiments on earth, and tending to elevate them to ever-growing conformity with the Divine characteristics of patient, untiring benevolence. Although celestial sorrow must endure, so long as any part of the creation groans

and travails in pain, it will be so softened and mitigated by firm confidence in God, and the cheering prospect of universal happiness, that it will have none of the bitterness which is associated with sorrow in our present experience. It will also be counterbalanced by a succession of stirring events, which will agitate the realms of light. The principle of self-sacrifice will develop heroism, of an order which we can but dimly conceive, from earthly analogies and scriptural intimations. Daring inroads will be made into the kingdom of darkness, and conquests will be effected by the display of that glorious banner, which is the symbol of Divine love. That wondrous love, so touchingly manifested, and operating with such patient, unwearied persistence, will gradually penetrate the deepest recesses of malignity and corruption, and will vanquish the enmity of the most obdurate and rebellious, until all things shall be subdued unto God by Christ, 'that God may be all in all.'

The sentence I have just quoted, indicating the unrestricted, undisputed, all-pervading influence of God, throughout the realms of intellect and emotion, as well as over the boundless extent of physical existence, affords a delightful theme of contemplation for the mind and heart. Our imperfect faculties can only make feeble efforts to reach the grandeur of the majestic thought, by means of some inadequate analogies. When we behold the sun, the most impressive visible token of the Creator's munificence and power, we vainly

strive to estimate the wondrous plenitude of light and warmth, which is poured forth with inexhaustible energy. Yet its beneficent influence, although supplying gladness and animation to numerous worlds, over an expanse almost inappreciable by our weak capacities, is unfelt in regions to which, perhaps, our whole solar system is but as an atom when compared to the solid globe. We are sometimes astonished at the wondrous power of human eloquence, in swaying congregated multitudes, and implanting unity of resolve and purpose with irresistible force. When a luminous idea, or the announcement of a great fact, traverses the civilised world, with the accelerated speed which modern science has bestowed, it may, as in a moment, modify long-cherished illusions, and banish injurious errors into the caverns of night. The marvellous potency of a commanding intellect has sometimes effected great changes in human thoughts and practices; and the softening sway of self-sacrificing compassion and benevolence has been known to melt the most obdurate perversity and callousness. These are feeble illustrations of the incalculable streams of light and love which will emanate from the great Fountain of elevated goodness, and be shed throughout the whole extent of the intelligent creation. There will be no bounds of unapproachable distance, no checks of misconception, no opposing obstacles of unwillingness, to weaken or chill the universal homage of the intellect and the affections.

Even in this life, an intelligent Christian may

perceive that many forms of oppression, many cruel practices and degrading superstitions, have been extirpated through the progress of enlightened sentiments, diffused by the circulation of the Bible; in which, it may be said, the thoughts of God are given to men in a restricted degree. The belief may be exultingly held that, so long as that hallowed book is read by the masses, those evil things will never return. This reflection assists my conception of the means by which the intelligent universe may be preserved in safety, holiness and unceasing progress, during the never-ending course of an immortal existence. Not by fetters and restraints, which paralyse spontaneity and liberty; not by spectacles of agony and suffering, which call forth the torpid obedience inspired by terror; but because the glorious thoughts of God will be diffused throughout the realms of intellect, with increasing clearness, elevation, and grandeur, and with a force and all-pervading power, of which physical light affords but a faint emblem. Because His wondrous love, in its unfathomable immensity, in the inexhaustible munificence of its tenderness, in the boundless wealth and variety of its manifestations, will fill and expand all the emotional faculties of intelligent beings, and render selfishness and malignity as impossible as an arctic temperature in the torrid zone. The declaration in Isaiah lxiv. 4 and 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,' may be applied to every new,

or before unknown, display of the wondrous resources of the Creator's wisdom, contrivance, exquisite taste, and perfect workmanship, whether in the physical or spiritual department of the universe. We realise the idea when we pass from a cold to a temperate, and from a temperate to a tropical region of the earth, and gaze with wonder and admiration on unnumbered diversities of trees, flowers, fruits, as well as birds, beasts, and insects, with the most striking contrasts of form, colour, and other characteristics, as likewise in the larger features which the scenery presents. Saul of Tarsus must have had an impressive sense of new and before unimagined thoughts, when his narrow conceptions respecting the Messiah gave place to a comprehension of the glorious reality. The highest and most forcible analogies furnished by our present knowledge and experience help us but little when we strive to form some conception of the magnificent thought, that God shall be all in all. Yet, even the feeblest efforts we make are calculated to elevate the intellect, and to infuse a glow of expansion and warmth into the emotional sensibilities.















